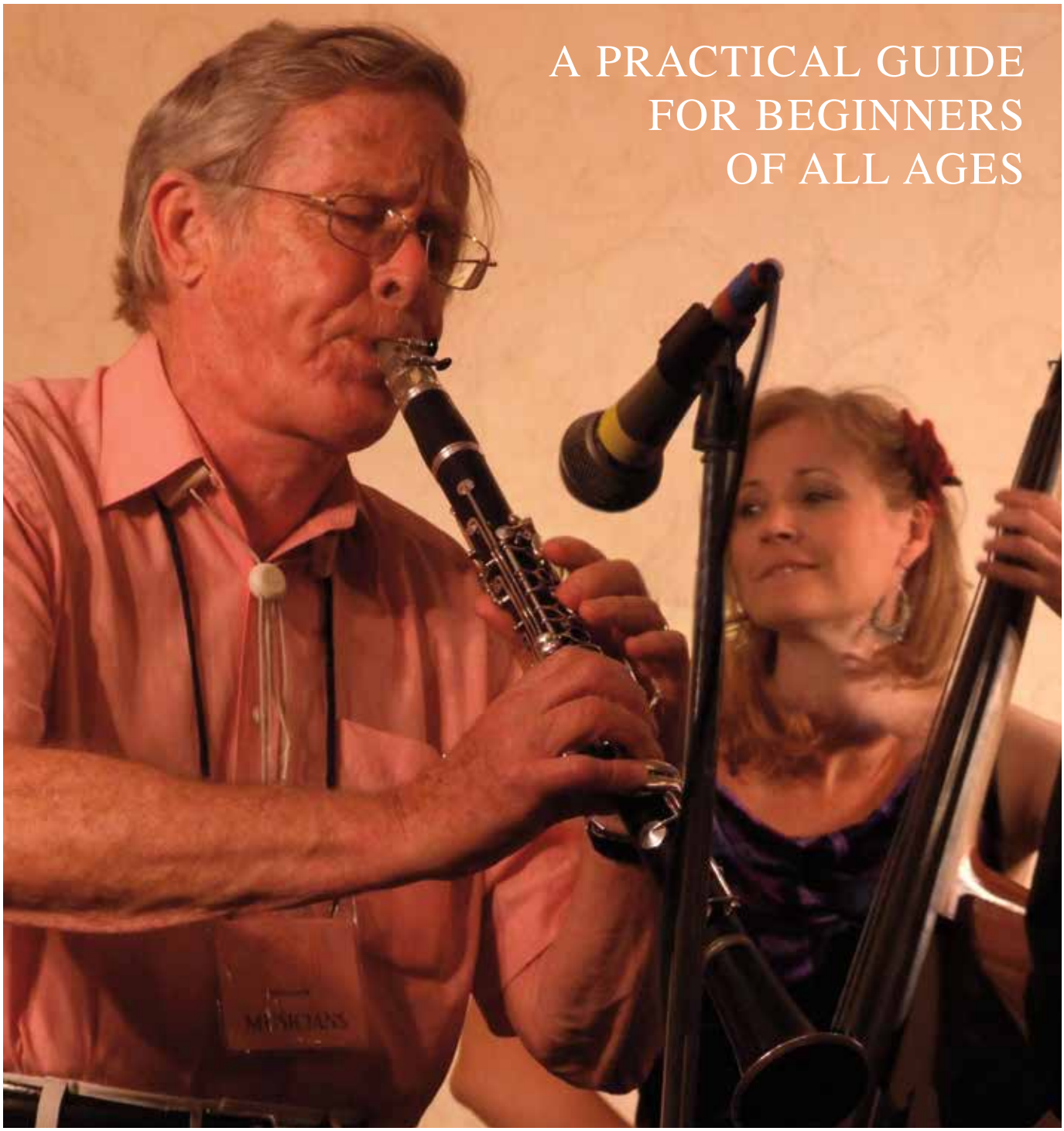
Introduction to Playing Early Jazz



by Rick Campbell

About the author:

Rick Campbell is a clarinet and saxophone player in Tigard, Oregon, whose degree is in Fine and Applied Arts from the University of Oregon. He does not have a music degree, but has played music professionally since 1960. He has played and recorded with a number of early jazz bands, including the Oregon Jazz Band, Calamity Jazz, and Columbia Classic Jazz Band. He was a founder of Dr. Jazz and the Interns and the Milneburg Jazz Band. He has also played with a number of big bands, concert bands, and with the golden oldies rock band, Gail Gage and the Fabulous Fifties Band. As a graphic designer and photographer, he has had an opportunity to know and photograph some of the better early jazz bands of the past twenty years.

On the front cover, the great Bob Wilber on clarinet and Nicki Parrott on bass at the 2010 Sacramento Music Festival.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 Foreword

6 Chapter 1. Hey, I want to play that kind of music!

9 Chapter 2. Early jazz as folk music.

13 Chapter 3. Singing through your instrument.

17 Chapter 4. What makes early jazz unique.

19 Chapter 5. An introduction to dixieland songs.

23 Chapter 6. Song lists and resources.

27 Chapter 7. Dixieland styles and skills.

32 Chapter 8. Playing lead in early jazz.

34 Chapter 9. Ensemble roles in early jazz.

37 Chapter 10. Special instrumental jazz effects.

38 Chapter 11. Performance tips, tension and attitude.

39 Chapter 12. Hand signals on stage.

41 Chapter 13. Early jazz rhythms and articulation.

43 Chapter 14. A brief introduction to music theory.

45 Chapter 15. An introduction to scales.

49 Chapter 16. Building basic chords.

53 Chapter 17. Scale and chord daily practice.

69 Chapter 18. Chord progressions and songs.

76 Chapter 19. Creating extemporaneous harmony lines.

85 Chapter 20. Early jazz riffs.

86 Chapter 21. The early jazz solo.

94 Chapter 22. Study, practice, rehearsal.

96 Chapter 23. Joining or starting a dixieland band.

99 Resources and Reading

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This ebook may be distributed and used free of charge in the non-profit cause of teaching early jazz.

What's in this book?

This book should have been written by a master of jazz-performance, but I am a journeyman player at best. I have searched for an introductory how-to book on this subject for many years without success, so I have had to blaze my own trail. Over the past twenty years, this book, or one superior to it, could have saved me many hours in the effort to learn to play early jazz on my instrument.

Of course, there are hundreds of excellent instrumental methods going back two centuries, and almost as many books on contemporary jazz theory, patterns, chords and exercises. But neither of these genres acknowledge early jazz, that period from about 1905 to about 1930 which saw an entirely new type of music suddenly become popular— a music which endures to this day in many variations.

What will this book teach? This is primarily a resource book, designed to point the reader in the right directions. Included are sections on:

- The development of early jazz.
- Developing early jazz ensemble playing skills.
- Developing jazz solo skills.
- Music resources for early jazz compositions.
- Some useful connections to the dixieland world.
- Some recommendations for listening and study.
- Practical tips on performance.

Who is the audience for this book? This book is intended to help musicians at all levels start to play in an early jazz ensemble, commonly known as a dixieland band. Some basic skills at reading music notation are needed. I think it will be useful to the following:

- Skilled legitimate instrumentalists who would like to expand their performance abilities.
- High school and college students who are interested in jazz, but who have a limited outlet for their jazz skills in contemporary jazz ensembles.
- Amateur adult instrumentalists who enjoy early jazz, and who would like to take up their instruments again.

How long will it take to become a jazz player?

It is a never-ending journey.

At the apprentice level, perhaps when you get together with friends and say, "Let's start a dixieland band," the goals are basic:

- To gain reasonable facility on your instruments, and to be able to play in tune.

• To learn the melody and basic harmonies of the most common early jazz tunes.
• To begin work on improvising skills.

The length of this first process varies depending on your fundamental musical aptitude, the amount to time you have to devote to study and practice each day, and your age. Yes, it is true that young players progress much more quickly than mature players.

If you are lucky enough to live near a good jazz teacher, and can take private lessons, you can get past the apprentice level very quickly indeed.

Beyond the scope of this book is achieving the status of journeyman jazz player. To be called to perform in a professional early jazz ensemble usually takes some years of practice and performance. A solid journeyman has very good command of his or her instrument, knows the early jazz repertoire, can read music well, and can improvise.

Finally, there are those comparatively few musicians who have become masters of their instruments in jazz. It is an elusive goal, and the drive to achieve it must be in the individual player. Artie Shaw said that he retired from music because, "I got tired of having the clarinet in my face six or seven hours a day."

Most of us who play early jazz don't have that level of dedication, but you must play and practice daily to see improvement, and to maintain the skills you already have gained.

The musical validity of early jazz. When you begin to study both the written music and recorded music of the jazz age, there is a surprising degree of substance and sophistication present. Certainly, the works of W.C. Handy, Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, and Eubie Blake are filled with sublime moments as compositions. And fortunately, you can still find recordings of bands such as Eddie Condon's and Billy Maxted's that were working six nights a week and who took the music to a very high level of development.

For the sensitive musician, early jazz can be a gold mine, with an emotional range from giddy elation to the deep pathos of the blues. That is why the music has survived to this day, and why it is worth playing again.

However, the last generation of early jazz players is dying off, and someone must step up to take their place or live extemporaneous performance of the music will be lost.

I hope this book will be a source of encouragement to the musicians who "feel it."

CHAPTER 1

Jazz band names have been italicized throughout this book as a guide to suggested listening.

Hey, I want to play that kind of music!

If you read the stories of early jazz players, nearly every one mentions a moment when the person suddenly said, "Hey, I want to play that kind of music" after hearing a dixieland band.

For example, George Lewis mentioned his fascination for street bands and dance halls in New Orleans at a very young age. Sidney Bechet got his hands on a clarinet before his teens, and learned by secretly listening to and mimicking the bands of The Crescent City. Bud Freeman told how he, Frank Teschemacher, Jimmy McPartland, and other members of the "Austin High Gang" bought instruments, and played along with the records of *The New Orleans Rhythm Kings*, wearing out the grooves in the process. Pete Fountain showed clarinet skill at the age of fourteen, and his father, a beer truck driver, took him along on deliveries in the summer so he could hear and meet the New Orleans club musicians. I remember first thinking I'd like to play dixieland when I saw Pete Fountain on television in 1957.

I hope the reader has experienced such a moment when the music grabbed him or her with a powerful magnetism. If you are lukewarm about early jazz after hearing it, or if you regard it as just another ethnic style like klezmer and polka bands, then you will probably be a rather cold and sterile performer.

If on the other hand, dixieland music "knocks you out" as it did the famous artists mentioned above, then you will bring to it the enthusiasm and emotional depth necessary to be a fine "jazzman." (My apologies to brilliant female players such as Bria Skonberg, Claire McKenna, Anat Cohen, and Anita Thomas, but that is the historic term.)

Learning from professional jazz players. In the beginning days of jazz, players "picked up" the music by listening, attending late-night jam sessions, and were often taught one-on-one by the New Orleans masters such as Lorenzo Tio, Alphonse Picou, and Sidney Bechet. Lore suggests that these lessons involved ear training, learning songs by rote, memorizing the established harmonies, and learning how to improvise. Although most better jazz players could read music, that was not the primary focus of a jazz education then.

Learning by listening to recordings. Decades ago, young players had to seek out records and buy them, a slow and expensive process. Today, the budding jazz performer has a vast store of recorded music and videos available from the

Jam sessions are fun, but they are a slow way to develop fundamental jazz skills, and may contribute to embedding bad habits.

iTunes store, on YouTube, on early jazz web sites, plus a very large selection of CDs which are available from Amazon and other sources. So it is now easy to listen to bands playing varied styles of music in the early jazz idiom.

Learning from jam sessions. Dixieland jazz preservation societies still exist around the country. They may bear different names, such as "Hot Club," "New Orleans Jazz Club," or "Traditonal Jazz Society," but you can find a comprehensive listing in *The Syncopated Times*, a national newspaper devoted to ragtime and jazz music. Most of the these jazz clubs have one or more open jam sessions for beginning players. I don't want to overstate the value of "sitting in" because the quality of music played in ad hoc jam sessions varies greatly, from very good to horrid. But it gives the beginning player a chance to meet other musicians, and get into the dixieland loop.

Learning by academic study. Until the 1960s most conservatories and college music departments were focused entirely on classic music and legitimate playing. Playing jazz of any type was often discouraged by the faculty. Gradually, these institutions recognized that a few schools around the country, such as Berklee, North Texas, and Westlake were turning out well-trained commercial and jazz musicians. Today, nearly every music school in the United States has a jazz studies program, including many community colleges.

College departments do an excellent job of teaching instrumental technique, music reading, music theory, and jazz solo skills. However, few of them acknowledge the existence of early jazz, suggesting instead that jazz began in 1940 at Minton's when Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie hit the scene with their be-bop inventions.

If you can find a college music department which actively encourages early jazz, take advantage of it by all means.

Learning from a private jazz instructor. If you already have solid technique, and have played in a quality high school or college ensemble, you have the foundation to make you a good early jazz instrumentalist. In that case, you understand your instrument, can read music, have a good tone, and probably are familiar with basic music theory.

If you are a beginner, or if you are self-taught, then a jazz instructor can help you achieve your goals much faster. Even those of us who have have read numerous books on technique tend to fall into bad habits, and it can help immensely to have a teacher break those bad habits, identify our weak points, and point us to those exercises that are going to make

us better as players and improvisors. It is axiomatic that the execises in our weak areas, that we hate the most, are the ones that will give us most improvement.

If you are really lucky, near your home you may find one of the dixieland masters who are scattered around the country. This person can become your guru, and pass down the secrets of early jazz playing that can't be taught by any book.

Learning from jazz camps. Finally, many local jazz societies have taken their responsibility for jazz education seriously, and have established "jazz camps." There are retreats for both youth and adults in places like Sacramento and San Diego, California; and New Orleans, Louisiana. These camps give you a chance to work with some of the best all-star jazz performers in the country. While travel and lodging can be costly, some traditional jazz societies provide scholarships for worthy applicants.

Jazz is a universal language which can be learned and spoken by anyone, from any culture. Here, the musically excellent Bohém Ragtime Jazz Band from Hungary performs in the 2008 Sacramento Jubilee opening parade.

CHAPTER 2

Early jazz as folk music.

Every human culture makes music. There seems to be an innate need to drum on logs and blow through hollowed out horns and reeds. It is a communal activity, and everyone in the village can participate.

Early jazz is a folk music which is a mixture of many different musical influences, including European, African, West Indian, and Spanish. In the folk tradition, music was passed down orally, by practice and rote learning with families and mentors. Besides early jazz, two examples of sophisticated music that developed in this manner are the Klezmer music of eastern Europe and the Gypsy music of the Balkans and southern Europe.

Most of the early New Orleans musicians were amateurs, or part-time players. They also held day jobs as tradesmen and stevedores. But they were still crazy about playing music "for every occasion" as their business cards said. Fortunately, there were cheap used military band instruments from the reconstruction era available to these musicians.

In New Orleans there was a loose guild or brotherhood of working musicians who called themselves "musicianers." Sidney Bechet frequently used the term to describe players with a high skill level at popular music who had never attended a conservatory or school of music. When the young clarinetist Irving Prestopnik was admitted to conservatory in New Orleans, his friends, including Louis and Leon Prima, began ridiculing him as Irving "fa-so-la," a joke on the solfège pitch names. He took it as his professional music name, and became Irving Fazola, one of few jazz players with formal music training.

Today, amateur and part-time players are by far the largest force keeping dixieland jazz alive, largely because there are few sustaining jobs for full-time early jazz musicians.

The reality is that we love to get together and play jazz with a great sense of freedom to make a personal statement, and interact as joyous, social human beings.

Having said that, it must be noted that there is no one "correct" way to play dixieland jazz because of the very nature of its collective freedom. Playing the same compositions will vary widely in note selection and style from person to person and from band to band.

Do I have to learn to read music? You may be asking, "If early jazz is folk music, why do I have to learn to read music notation?" It is true that some early jazz players did not read

much, if any, music. And there are those who feel that non-readers play with a more original, honest, or expressive style. However, most early jazz horn players had the ability to read a lead sheet (melody line with chord symbols) and knew the associated chord notes. They then played those compositions with their own expressive style, taking great latitude with the written notes.

An intrumentalist can learn to play early jazz without any reading skills, by rehearsing with friends or joining jam sessions. But there are some drawbacks:

• It is a slow process. You need to play it over and over again until you get it right and memorize it. That may be fine if you are 14 years old, but if you are 55, you don't have that much time, and your aging brain works more slowly.

• It is a painful process. If you are just feeling your way around on your instrument, you are going to play many experimental "wrong" notes at first— on melody, on harmony, on solos. These notes are going to annoy the more experienced players in your group, as well as any audience that may be present.

• It is difficult to learn new tunes. The beginning player can probably quickly pick up *Just A Closer Walk With Thee* in Concert Bb, but tunes like *Copenhagen* and *Sweet Substitute* are more complex. The player who can read a lead sheet has a great advantage.

• This book has less value to the non-reader. The exercises in this book presume a ninth grade high school band reading level, about at the intermediate method level. Some reading skills are essential to the most fundamental part of this book: learning your chords on your instrument.

On a recent jazz cruise, I met an intelligent fellow in his 70s who was attempting to learn jazz clarinet without music notation. He was able to play banjo, so he knew chord sequences by name. And he was able to play the musical saw, so he had a good ear. But unfortunately, he was unable to make a connection with these skills to the clarinet, and the musical result was unfortunately bad. Basic music reading skills can help the player bridge that gap.

Playfulness in jazz. Just because I recommend learning to read music does not mean that I want to take away the inherent playfulness of jazz as a joyous, social folk music endeavor.

Here's an old joke: A boy comes home from school and says, "Dad, I want to be a jazz musician when I grow up." The father says, "You will have to choose one or the other."

Like all humor, it hints at an important truth. Jazz musicians enjoy the music in a playful way, and still can access their "inner child." Notice that in Western languages, we "play" music, not "work" music or "labor" music.

The loose, silly, adolescent approach has been a part of early jazz from the beginning. In fact, my wife has often observed that some adult dixieland musicians resemble little boys with attention deficit disorder (ADD).

This stands in sharp contrast to the high seriousness of performing concert music, in which absolute fidelity to the score is essential. If you play ad lib notes in a concert band, you will probably be asked to leave. If you play interesting ad lib notes in an early jazz band, you will receive great applause.

If it is true that many jazz musicians have ADD, that might explain why they have short attention spans and are easily bored. That also might explain why early jazz bands were intrigued by "freak" solos with unusual intervals and rhythms. This tendency was carried forward in jazz, first with bebop in the 1940s, later in avant garde free jazz without predetermined structure, and in contemporary jazz today.

Right notes and wrong notes. Some writers have suggested that there are no "wrong notes" in jazz. That may be true in contemporary jazz, but I would prefer a different definition for early jazz: If you play a note that makes your audience and band members wince, it is probably the wrong note for that time and place. If your audience finds a note that you are playing stressful or even painful, move off it one half step until you find a note that fits better within the chords. If you have any doubt, just look at the faces of your audience or band mates: they will tell you if it is a "bad" note instantly.

Most early jazz compositions (not all) use simple chords and chord sequences that are familiar and comfortable to audiences which might also enjoy Appalachian folk music, Scots/Irish folk music, Bluegrass, Early Country music, and Classical music up to about 1850.

Over the past five centuries, musical audiences have become gradually more tolerant of complex chords, but for our purposes in starting to play jazz, the players need to learn primarily major and minor triads in a few standard jazz keys, plus the addition of the dominant seventh to these triads.

Later, you can learn the diminished chords, sixth chords, ninth chords, and major seventh chords that are also found in early jazz compositions.

My goal in this book is not to make the jazz player a slave to the practice of chords, scales, and etudes. If you like to play the your instrument, then daily practice can be a joy. This is especially true if you can relate musical exercises directly to the early jazz compositions you are learning.

The payback for your study and practice time is that you will then be able to join a jam session or play with a band, play notes that your audience considers "right" and receive their warm, positive response.

If playing jazz becomes a serious chore and a source of tension or anxiety, then you are not doing it right.

These guys are having fun! Although they are all consummate and versatile musicians, every show of the The Black Dogs Jazz Band is a galloping tour de force. Show here at the 2011 Sacramento Jubilee. From left to right: Dave Gannett, tuba; Bob Leary, guitar, banjo, and vocals; Jim Buchmann, reeds; Tom Hook, leader, piano and vocals.

CHAPTER 3

Singing through your instrument.

First, let us clarify what we are doing when we play jazz on a musical instrument. We are not operating a mechanical device, blowing in air and pressing key work, as one might operate an old pump organ. We are singing through the instrument.

The voice was the first human instrument, and a great deal of the brain, primarily the outer cerebral cortex, is devoted to speech. We can look upon singing as another dimension of speaking which places more emphasis on pitch than normal conversation does. (At least this is true in the West; many Asian languages are more pitch and inflection sensitive.)

So if you are preparing to make a tone on a wind instrument, it is helpful if you can sing it first, or "pre-hear" it. The ideal jazz horn player would have a background in solfège and choral music. Such a background gives a heightened sensitivity to intervals, pitch, and intonation.

The beginning horn player begins to develop a special sense of what note he is about to play, perhaps partly throught muscle memory of the throat and embouchure, and perhaps partly through inaudible vibrations which are felt or "heard" before the tone sounds. Beginning band teachers have to endure this process until young wind players can reliably play the note they intended.

Advanced players develop this sixth sense so well that it becomes automatic. When they initiate a tone, it comes out precisely on pitch. As skill grows, the horn player can also control not only the volume and pitch of the tone, but also the character of the sound through subtle changes in breath pressure, oral cavity shape, lip and tongue placement.

Good jazz musicians have "big ears," which means they can hear intervals, melodies, harmonies, and chord sequences.

Ear training. If you already have a good ear, you are on your way. Many early jazz players, including Sidney Bechet and Wild Bill Davision, were able to play a melody flawlessly after hearing it once, and were also able the hear the underlying chord structure. Musicians call this ability "big ears."

If you have trouble hearing intervals and chords, there are a number of ways to improve your abilities through practice and study.

1. Ear training classes. You local community college probably offers classes in ear training or selfège. This is a structured way to help you understand the musical tones you are hearing.

2. Ear training CDs. Today there are a number of ear

training methods with books and CDs available on the web or at your local music store. They offer a relatively inexpensive way to learn at home at your own pace.

3. Join a choral group. Multi-part singing is an excellent way to improve your sense of pitch and to learn harmonies. Joining a high school or college choir, singing in a church or community choir, or singing with a barbershop group, will all prove valuable.

4. Instrumental etudes. The better method books include etudes in thirds and fourths. Studing these intervals especially will help you hear and play appropriate harmonies.

5. The cat and mouse game. Jim Buchmann uses what he calls the "cat and mouse game" to teach younger students. The instructor plays a series of notes, and then the student repeats them on his or her instrument. As the game continues, the patterns become more complex and the intervals get wider. This improves your ability to play what you hear on your instrument.

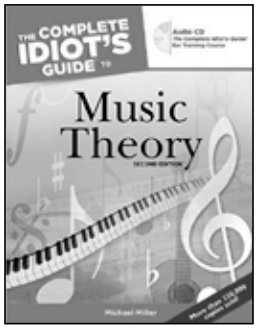
6. Trading fours. When you are rehearsing with your band, you can also practice the common jazz technique of alternating solos, usually in four-bar phrases. In this case, I recommend that the second player tries to mimic the first player as closely as possible.

7. Transcribing. Michael Miller's book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Music Theory* has excellent chapters on ear training and on transcribing music. While difficult at first for most of us, this turns out to be a most useful skill, both in learning solos,

More about the brain and music. The brain is a remarkable computer, with vastly more parallel processing power than any computer yet built. Scientists are still astonished at how the brain can arrive at so many answers with such speed, compact size, and minimal energy use.

This raises the question of whether there is a genetic component to musical talent, that is, whether gifted musicians have a special DNA that others do not. The noted conductor and violinist Eduoard Schmeider, who was a child prodigy on violin in Russia, took to the violin easily and naturally at an early age. He, and others, feel strongly that there is a genetic music memory that is enherited. However, researchers have not been able to identify a specific gene which confirms this.

For the rest of us without special gifts, our challenge is to develop our brain and related insrument playing body parts to the maximum level possible.



An awkward title, but a very useful book for the beginning jazz musician.

There is also a reasonable question whether the playing of jazz and improvising are special genetic skills. I mention this because we have all known brilliant, conservatory trained musicians who could not feel the jazz "swing" beat, and who were terrified at attempting improvisation.

Scientists have learned some important facts about how the brain works that can inform our approach to playing jazz clarinet. Most important, the cerebral cortex seems to consist of a network of interlinked cells which have both memory and processing capability. Called "parallel processing" in computer speak, this allows the brain to arrive at answers quickly using many simultaneous connections.

Some of what we learn in music is accessible to the concious mind, and much more of that knowledge resides in the subconcious. In a perfect world, we musicians should strive to let the subconcious take over and "let the music play itself."

For those who wish to do more reading on this subject, I recommend *The Two Second Advantage* by Vivek Ranadive and Kevin Maney, and *Music, The Brain, and Ecstasy* by Robert Jourdain.

The important point here for beginning jazz instrumentalists is that 1) playing the instrument well is a challenging discipline in itself, and 2) creating jazz harmonies and solos in real time is an even more complex event that somehow is guided by the parallel processing abilites of the brain.

I say "somehow" because neither scientists nor music instructors know exactly how it happens.

Some people come to it easily, as is the case when at the age of twelve, violinist Stephane Grappelli first heard a recording of Joe Venuti playing jazz. He said, "I can do that!" rushed home, took his violin out of the case, and suddenly began his career as a precocious jazz violinist.

Others of us study our instrument, study our chords and scales, analyze jazz compositions and practice assiduously to achieve gradual improvement. Do we lack something in our DNA? Perhaps if we get great pleasure from playing jazz, it does not matter.

The role of tension and fear. There are few artistic or athletic activities that can be performed at the highest level when the performer is tense, distracted, angry, or fearful. That is certainly true when playing jazz. The emotions can interfere with the performer's ability to easily access those brain cells which guide the performance.

For the horn player, this may result in a tendency to grip

the horn too tightly, resulting in arm and neck pain; a failure to breathe, resulting in running out of air on long notes or phrases; a tendency to compress the embouchure, resulting in a pinched tone; a tendency to forget one's part or to play wrong notes in phrases that one normally plays well; and of course, the bane of all clarinetists: squeaks.

As I stress in a later chapter, relaxation is essential. A state of centered focus will allow the performer to use the large amount of subconcious information that is packed in the brain from years of listening, practice and performance.

Technique is useful. For those readers who have the idea that early jazz can be played intuitively with much gusto and few technical skills, remember what my clarinet teacher Jim Buchmann once told me, "Technique is not an end in itself when playing jazz clarinet, but you can never have *too much* technique."

It doesn't matter if you play clarinet or violin if you can hear the music. Here, clarinetist Bob Draga trades four bar phrases with violinist Tom Rigney at the Sacramento Jubilee. The music just flows naturally from jazz musicians of this caliber.

CHAPTER 4

What makes early jazz unique?

Early jazz is folk music. No single person invented it. Early jazz, initially just called "jass" or "jazz," was a fusion of all the types of music played around New Orleans, as mentioned in an earlier chapter.

What makes it different from Western academic (or classical music) is the degree of freedom given to the players.

Academic music structure: European popular music began as folk music. In the middle ages, it included the story ballads and ditties of the day, and was generally performed by roving troubadors, or *jongleurs*, who entertained at fairs, festivals, and local inns. During Lent, music was forbidden, so the troubadors converged on southern France, and held camp-outs where they sang and played together, and taught each other new songs. Little of this music was written down, so even though it still exists as European folk music, we are not sure of the performance keys and tuning of instruments five hundred years ago.

Church music was also evolving gradually in chants and plainsongs, although it did not have modern harmonies or part singing.

As Western music matured during and after the renaissance, music schools started, and teachers began to work out many practical and theoretical problems, including:

- Music notation.
- The naming and sequence of chords.
- Agreement of standardized pitch (typically A = 440 cycles per second in much of the world.)
- Standardization on the twelve tone scale with "equal temperament," so that harpsichords, pianos, and organs could play in any key.
- Development and standardizaton of musical instruments.

Western music then became more professional and specialized. No longer did the musician just make up his own music and words and sing them while playing the lute.

In Bach and Mozart's time, it was still expected that keyboard players learn to improvise, playing variations on a theme in real time. However, this particular art seems to have been forgotten in the modern conservatory of music.

Academic music specialization today looks like this:

- **Composers** invent new musical themes.
- **Arrangers or orchestrators** arrange the music into a detailed written music score and parts.

• **Conductors or directors** interpret the score and tell the musicians how the music is to be played.

• **Musicians and/or singers**, all well trained in musical technique and music reading, perform the piece.

It is also implicit that orchestras and concert bands will rehearse diligently so that every performance will be letter perfect, and all performances will be exactly the same.

Early jazz structure. When you watch an early jazz band perform, you often find that there is no conductor out front, and that the musicians are not reading music.

If you watch the same jazz band several times, you will notice that performances vary considerably– the same song may be played with different tempos, harmonies, dynamics, and solos. Every performance is different.

As we will discuss in detail later, all the musicians in an early jazz band have a great deal of freedom to create the music as they perform it. That means, to some degree, an early jazz player wears the hats of composer, arranger, director and musician. For example, the leader might call "Bb Blues." This is not a song, but means that the band will make up melody and horn harmonies over 12 bar blues chords.

The two characteristics that make early jazz unique when compared to academic Western music are:

1. Collective harmonization and improvisation. In the typical early jazz band, players themselves select harmony notes and countermelodies. The more skilled and experienced the players, the better the musical result.

To many trained musicians this presents a huge level of risk and fear. A jazz ensemble is going to perform without knowing exactly how it will sound!

We must acknowledge that experienced early jazz players do memorize or work out standard harmony parts and solos, so their performances are not totally new each time.

2. Extemporaneous solos. Typically, every player in an early jazz band is expected to be able to take an improvised solo. At least, the solo should *sound* improvised on the spot, even if the player has developed and carefully improved it after many years of performing.

As we note elsewhere, these two special characteristics don't apply to a hot jazz band which reads all its arrangements and solos. These bands are in a separate category: they sound something like an extemporaneous jazz band, but their performances are written, orchestrated, and performed much like a concert band.

CHAPTER 5

An introduction to dixieland songs.

The names of bands, songs, and musical terms you will want to further research are italicized throughout this book.

Perhaps by luck, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was the first to record in 1917, ushering in the jazz craze.

So what is the dixieland repertoire? I first asked that question myself twenty years ago when I became interested in early jazz, and there is no short, neat answer. It reminds me of the Supreme Court Justice, who said when ruling on pornography, "I can't define it, but I know it when I see it."

In this introduction, I am presuming that the reader knows nothing about the music called "dixieland" and so I will try to give a brief overview and orientation. Even the term "dixieland" is disliked by many musicians, who would prefer to call it Traditional Jazz (Trad Jazz in the UK), Early Jazz, or Classic Jazz. Unfortunately, none of these names has stuck. But if you say, "I'll be playing dixieland on Thursday night" almost everyone has a hazy concept of what style music they will hear.

For many years between 1900 and 1920, the African American and Creole musicians of New Orleans simply said they were playing ragtime, or "ragging it."

With the success of Tom Brown's *Jass Band from Dixieland* in 1916, and with the first recordings of the *Original Dixieland Jazz Band* in 1917, the term "dixieland" came to define the genre.

What types of compositions are played? An extensive list of popular dixieland tunes is provided in the next chapter. When I first entered the world of early jazz, I was puzzled, because the accepted "dixieland standards" were so varied—in tone, in structure, in style. I later found that the reason is that dixieland is a melting pot music, and has borrowed from many sources. Here's my brief analysis of the types of music one might encounter at a typical dixieland jazz festival.

• **Ragtime.** This music began as multi-strain piano compositions at the turn of the 19th century. Dixieland favorites include *The Entertainer* and *Twelfth Street Rag*.

• **Cakewalks, One-Steps, Two-Steps.** Pieces such as *Creole Belles* and *At A Georgia Camp Meeting* are evocative of fast dance music played before the turn of the century.

• **Hymns, Spirituals, Gospel.** Dixieland is the only popular music that gets away with "jazzing up" church music. It is done with a degree of respect and joy, and fits in the Southern revival tradition and African-American Gospel music. The dixieland player will learn tunes such as *Amazing Grace*, *Bye and Bye*, and *The Battle Hymn of the Republic.*

• **Folk Songs and Ballads.** Perhaps the two most popular of the ancient ballads are *Frankie and Johnny* and *St. James*

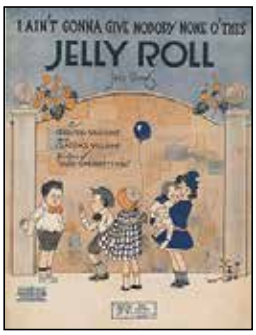
Infirmary Blues.

• **Marches.** The dixieland "Second Line" parade comes out of the New Orleans street brass band tradition, and includes multi-strain compositions such as *High Society, Under the Double Eagle,* and *1919*.

• **The Blues.** The blues spring from the African oral tradition, and most often are based on the 12-bar blues of the Mississippi Delta, although there are also 16- and 8-bar variations. True early blues include *Mecca Flat Blues, Careless Love, Empty Bed Blues, Atlanta Blues, Dallas Blues,* and *St. Louis Blues* (1st and 3rd strains). Many of the other tunes with "blues" in the title are more sophisticated compositions that had the appellation tacked on to help them sell sheet music and records during the jazz age.

• **Novelty Songs.** Dixieland folks have always enjoyed lighthearted nonsense songs, ranging from *Ice Cream* to *Auntie Skinner's Chicken Dinner.*

• **Early Jazz Original Compositions, 1900-1940.** The compositions of Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, Clarence Williams, Kid Ory, Louis and Lillian Armstrong, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and The Original Dixieland Jazz Band form the core of the classic jazz band repertoire. The dixieland clarinet player needs to become familiar with tunes like *Original Dixieland One Step, Fidgety Feet, Copenhagen, Milenburg Joys, Muskrat Ramble, Dippermouth Blues, Struttin' With Some Barbeque, Tin Roof Blues,* and *Sister Kate* to be considered a true dixieland player.



Clarence Williams, born in New Orleans, became one of the most prolific early jazz composers.

• **Popular Songs of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s.** Dixieland bands have also always jazzed up the popular songs of their era from Tin Pan Alley and Broadway, so you will hear *Ain't Misbehavin', Oh Lady Be Good, Bye Bye Blackbird, All of Me, Chicago, Margie* and almost any other popular tune that was ever a hit, from *Bill Bailey* to *What a Wonderful World*.

There was a great fascination with faraway places in the 1920s, so we also have a subcategory of exotica in dixieland, including *The Sheik of Araby, Hindustan, San, China Boy,* and *Limehouse Blues.*

Music is a reflection of its times, and during the 'Teens and 20s there were tunes that portrayed Black people as natural musicians and dancers. To America's credit, these have mostly been filed away as embarrassments. However, you will still hear Irving Berlin's *Alexander's Ragtime Band* (1911) and Bing Crosby's hit, *Mississippi Mud* (1927), innocently played by dixieland bands with no malice intended.

• **Revival Jazz Compositions, 1941-1960.** Especially in

George Gershwin's first hit was a dixie nostalgia song made famous by Al Jolson. George took the money, but never mentioned it again.

the West Coast Jazz Revival, musicians such as Lu Watters and Turk Murphy wrote a series of "new old" tunes such as *Big Bear Stomp, Annie Street Rock,* and *Emperor Norton's Hunch.*

• **Nostalgia Songs.** The first wave of dixieland nostalgia songs were about the joys of living in the Old South, some perhaps intentionally ironic, such as *Swanee, South, Dear Old Southland,* and *When It's Sleepy Time Down South*. Today, as the dixieland audience ages, reminiscing songs such as *Radio, Saloon, Barefoot Days*, and *Old Bones* have come into vogue.

• **New Compositions in the Early Jazz style.** Of course, there's nothing to keep a contemporary composer from writing songs that feel much earlier. So dixieland bands may also play recent material such as *Why Don't You Come Down to New Orleans* (1991), *A Wink and a Smile* (1993), *Miss Celie's Blues* (1985), *Bring Me Sunshine* (1966) and *Hang On Little Tomato* (2004).

Whew! That's quite a range of material. As the reader can see, there is no single type of "dixieland song." Their only common feature is that they are typically written in 4/4 or 2/4 time signatures. Histories report that early jazz bands did play waltzes for dancing, but in recent history, most jazz leaders resist unless requested by persistent dancers.

Structure and standard keys. Because many dixieland compositions have been passed down by rote, or learned from records, many players can only negotiate them in the "standard keys."

We will talk later in detail about the chord structure of dixieland tunes. But for now it is worth noting that most of them have their tonal center near concert Bb. That places the Bb instruments (clarinet, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, bass saxophone, cornet, and trumpet) in their comfortable home key of C.

In descending order, the most common dixieland major keys have historically been:

Concert Bb (two flats, very common)
Concert F (one flat, very common)
Concert Eb (three flats, common)
Concert Ab (four flats, common)
Concert C (no sharps or flats, relatively rare)
Concert G (one sharp, seldom used today)

You will also find entire songs, or strains of songs, which are in the relative minor of the above keys.

Some of the multi-strain compositions in the dixieland

repertoire change keys from strain to strain, for example:

Original Dixieland One Step, Tiger Rag, Fidgety Feet, Concert Bb/Eb/Ab

Yellow Dog Blues, Beale Street Blues, King Porter Stomp, High Society, Concert Bb/Eb

That's A Plenty, Concert Dm/Bb

Panama, Concert Eb/Ab

Wolverine Blues, Concert Bb/Eb/Bb.

The prepared dixieland player is going to be familiar with these compositions in the standard keys.

Singer's keys. When sheet music was prepared for jazz standards, words were added, and the songs were usually pitched for a soprano or tenor voice. So when alto and baritone voices sing the same song, it needs to be transposed down several steps. This can create many problems for a band. I can only recommend that you rehearse with the singer, perhaps write out transposed charts, and learn the songs in the unusual keys.

In a jam session, unfamiliar "singer's keys" can cause outright trainwrecks, so if you are uncomfortable, just lay out and let the rhythm section deal with it. Another option is to let the vocalist sing one chorus and modulate to the standard band key for the rest of the song.

Backing vocalists is a special skill, because singers prefer their own keys and arrangements. Here, the jazz legend Pat Yankee is shown singing with the Frisco Jazz Band in 2008 at the Sacramento Jubilee.

CHAPTER 6

Song lists and resources.

Having reviewed and categorized the many types of compositions played by dixieland bands, the next question is where to find them. There are not many legally published sheet music resources that are still in print today, but thanks to the internet, you should be able to access almost any song ever written, some through legitimate sources and some through underground sources. Be sure to read the notes on copyright law at the end of this chapter.

Original piano sheet music. One hundred years ago, most of the revenues from songwriting came from sheet music sales. The composer turned over his musical sketch to the publishing company, which polished it up and arranged it for piano.

While the original sheet music is the best authority on a song, there are some drawbacks for Bb horn players. They are written in the concert key so they must be transposed by the player, either manually or on the fly. Many early piano charts often to do not include chord symbols, although some have guitar tabulature above the staff.

There are vast amounts of old piano sheet music available at low prices, but it serves mainly as a starting point for the dixieland band to write out a lead sheet (melody with chords) or a complete arrangement.

Another problem encountered with published sheet music is that dixieland bands have modified songs over the years, or have learned them by ear, so that the melody and chords that are traditionally played today can be quite different than the original. A good example is the sheet music of *Tin Roof Blues*, which has a more intricate melody line than the common fake book version.

Written dixieland arrangements. The advantage of written arrangments, transposed for each instrument, is that they allow a group of reading musicians to quickly produce music which resembles dixieland. The effectiveness of their performance will depend on their ability to play in the jazz idiom, and to develop a "swing" feel as discussed in a later chapter.

Most collections of dixieland standards from major pubishers, such as *Authentic Dixieland Original Arrangements for Dixieland Band*, The Big 3 Music Corporation, NY, NY. are out of print, but you may still be able to find them from used music dealers. You may also now purchase affordable and very good arrangements at *Simply Early Jazz* (www.simplyearlyjazz.com). These charts will allow a reading dixieland

band to quickly develop a basic performance repertoire.

There are other smaller arrangers who sell their own dixieland arrangements directly, and they can be located in the classified section of *The Syncopated Times* newspaper or through a web search.

Fake Books. In the 1940s, almost every piano player kept an illegal fake book hidden under the bench. These collections had small lead sheets (melody, chords, words) of nearly every popular song, so the pianist could play requests.

Unfortunately, most of these books still violate copyright laws, and therefore, I cannot direct you to the excellent *Firehouse Fake Book* or any of the dozens of others of lesser quality. Because these books were never authorized or reviewed by the original publishers, they often have errors in notes and chords.

Fortunately, there are now some legal early jazz lead sheet collections such as *The Real Dixieland Book*, Hal Leonard publisher, which are readily available from your local bookseller or from Amazon.com.

Internet resources. There are now many excellent ways to access dixieland music on the web. For example, you can check the University of Chicago Library, *Guide to the Charles B. Anderson Fake Books Collection 1870-1998*, and obtain lead sheets for many obscure compositions.

The Creole Jazz Band has compiled *The Creole Jazz Band Fake Books* with copyright-free tunes written before 1923. They are available at www.creolejazzband.com for free download in C, Bb, Eb, F, Treble Clef and C Bass Clef versions.

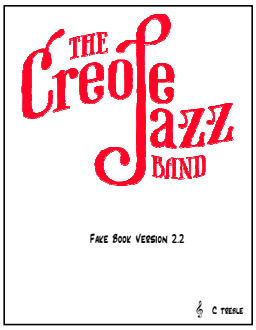
As mentioned above *Simply Early Jazz* offers a growing list of early jazz arrangements at *www.simplyearlyjazz.com*.

Another excellent networking source is to join the *Dixieland Jazz Mailing List* or DJML at www.islandnet.com/~djml.

Facebook users should see *Dixieland Jazz and Our Kind of Music.*

A Beginning Song List. The list on the following pages was used by a recent jazz cruise as their tune list for jammers with prefered keys indicated. It is a very basic list, and many (not all) of the tunes are simple in their structure and easy to learn. The list includes some of the most popular and frequently recorded compositions of the past hundred years.

Every aspiring dixieland musician should be familiar with these dixieland standards. A dixieland band could work from this list and soon be able to play an interesting program.



This fake book series is a good place to start because all songs are copyright-free, and the books are a free download.

Some Common Dixieland Jam Tunes and Their Keys

Algiers Strut F
Am I Blue F
All of Me C
Ain't Misbehavin Eb
Alcoholic Blues Eb
Alexander's Ragtime Band C/F
Am I Blue F/Bb
Angry Bb
At The Jazz Band Ball Bb
Avalon F
Baby Face C
Baby, Won't You Please Come Home F or Ab
Basin Street Blues Bb
Beale Street Blues Bb/Eb
Big Butter and Egg Man F
Bill Bailey F
Bourbon Street F/Ab
Bugle Boy March F
Bye Bye Blackbird F
Cakewalking Babies From Home Bb
Canal Street Blues F
Careless Love F
China Boy F
Dallas Blues Bb
Darktown Strutters Ball Bb/C
Dinah F/Ab
Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans C
Dr. Jazz Eb
Everybody Loves My Baby F
Exactly Like You Bb
Fidgety Feet Bb/Eb/Ab
Five Foot Two Bb
Frankie And Johnny Bb
Georgia On My Mind F
Hindustan Bb
Honeysuckle Rose F
How Come You Do Me Like You Do Bb
I Can't Give Anything But Love F
I Found A New Baby F
I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter Bb/C
Indiana F
It's a Long Way To Tipperary Bb
Ja-Da F
Jazz Me Blues Eb
Just a Closer Walk Bb
Just a Little While to Stay Here F/Ab
Just Because Bb
(Oh) Lady Be Good F
Mama Don't Allow Bb
Mama's Gone Goodbye Bb
Mandy Make Up Your Mind F
Margie F
Mecca Flats Blues C
Melancholy Blues F
Milenburg Joys Bb
Muskrat Ramble Ab or Bb
My Blue Heaven Eb
Nobody's Sweetheart F
Oh Baby! F
Once In Awhile Bb
Panama Bb/Eb/Ab
Peoria Bb
Ponchartrain Blues Bb
Precious Lord Ab
Rosetta F
Royal Garden Blues F/Bb
Runnin' Wild Bb
San Francisco Bay Blues Bb
Shade Of The Old Apple Tree F
Shake That Thing Eb
Shiek of Araby Bb
Shine Eb
Some of These Days F
Someday Sweetheart F
South Eb
St. Louis Blues F
Storyville Blues Ab
Sweet Georgia Brown F
Sweet Sue F
Sweethearts on Parade F
That's A Plenty Bb
Tiger Rag Bb/Eb/Ab
Tin Roof Blues Bb
Tishimingo Blues F
Trog's Blues Bb
Trouble In Mind F
Up A Lazy River F
Wabash Blues Eb
Washington And Lee Swing Bb
Way Down Yonder F
Weary Blues F/Bb
What A Friend We Have In Jesus F
When I Grow Too Old To Dream F/Eb
When You're Smiling Bb
Who's Sorry Now Bb & Eb
Yellow Dog Blues Bb/Eb
You Always Hurt The One You Love Bb

As one might expect, given that many thousands for songs which are suitable for dixieland performance have been written over the past century, every band leader and dixieland society has their favorites. As a beginning player, you can't possibly learn them all right away, but the list above is a good place to start.

An important word about copyrights. There is a misconception that the "old" songs played by dixieland bands are in the public domain and may be copied and used freely. While that is probably true of compositions copyrighted before 1923, all the later songs do enjoy some degree of copyright protection.

When you buy sheet music or fake books from a reputable publisher which states the authors and copyright holders of the composition, you are paying a small royalty for the right to receive the song in printed or electronic form.

Sheet music obtained from underground sources without payment to the copyright holders is very likely illegal. Yes, it is true that many dixieland bands ignore the rules, but one should still be aware of them.

It is also possible that your band, or the organization hiring your band, may be asked to pay a license fee for public performance of copyrighted songs. That revenue is then paid to the authors or their heirs through a complex formula by the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) or Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI). For example, copyrights on Jelly Roll Morton's later copyrighted compositions still generate income to his heirs in a five-figure amount every year.

If you intend to record a copyrighted song, you should contact a company such as the Harry Fox Agency (HFA) to negotiate and pay for a "mechanical license" to do so.

CHAPTER 7

Dixieland styles and skills.

Tex Wyndham, noted pianist, cornetist, band leader and jazz writer, defines seven distinct styles in his 1997 book, *Texas Shout: How Dixieland Jazz Works* and I recommend his book highly as a general introduction to the music and its history.

However, our purpose in this chapter is to give you, the new dixieland player, an understanding of what skills you will need to develop to play in dixieland ensembles today, so I will symplify Tex's categories a bit.

Having started several bands myself, I understand that most bands are driven by enthusiasm rather than by analysis, meaning that they don't sit down and write a specific plan which defines the band, its instrumentation, and its style. Consequently, some bands play a mix of many different early jazz styles, either by design, or because "we just liked that song." They are, as Duke Ellington always claimed of his band, "beyond category."

If one goes to a dixieland jazz festival today, one will find that the most popular bands fit into five general dixieland categories.

The Devil Mountain Jazz Band has a huge library of written arrangements, but the players are also exceptional soloists. This allows them to re-create classic jazz recordings from King Oliver to Lu Watters to Duke Ellington.

1. Reading combos and hot dance ensembles. If you are going to play with a band which uses written arrangements, you will not need to know much about music theory, nor will you need to improvise your own harmony lines. All that will be resolved by the arranger.

The skills you will need include:

1. Very good music reading and interpretation skills.
2. Excellent technique and intonation.
3. The ability to play in different keys comfortably.
4. Some extemporaneous solo skills. (Need varies.)

Hot dance ensembles, such as *The Royal Society Orchestra* and Vince Giordano's *Nighthawks*, usually feature short solo segments, and depend on playing precision for their effect. In some cases in hot dance bands, solos may be written out note for note.

The classic large reading band was *The Bob Crosby Band* of the 1930s and 40s. Other popular reading dixieland ensembles such as *The Devil Mountain Jazz Band* and *Black Swan Classic Jazz Band* may feature longer solos, but depend on their own arrangements to create their special sound and texture. The premise is that the band can give a convincing performance as long as qualified reading substitute players are available.

The Buck Creek Jazz Band is an example of a popular band which plays without written arrangements in a mannner reminiscent of the best of Eddie Condon's Chicago style bands.

2. Chicago style. Today, hundreds of dixieland bands around the world play variations of the Chicago style even if they can't define it. Essentially, these bands play without written arrangements. A common song routine is: one or several ensemble choruses clearly stating the melody, then a number of extemporaneous solo choruses around the band, and finally, one or more ensemble choruses, culminating in a climactic "out chorus."

These bands gather their inspiration from the many groups that Eddie Condon assembled in Chicago and New York. They may feature a guitar and string bass in the rhythm section, and a 2/4-beat swing feel is common. Dixieland bands of this style dominated 52 Street in New York City during the 1940s, and played mostly hot swinging jazz for listening.

Because in the early days, the musicians were professionals, working six nights a week, they all learned the standard harmonies and "routines," that is, the sequence of special introductions, verses, choruses, breaks, and endings. They were a unique collection of highly skilled musicians that the world has not seen in many decades because of the decline in live jazz employment.

Chicago style music may include both early New Orleans standards and pop tunes of the 20s, 30s, and 40s.

The skills you will need to play convincing Chicago style dixieland include:

1. A very good ear for music.
2. Fluent extemporaneous solo skills.
3. The ability to create ensemble harmony lines.
4. Reasonably good technique and tone.

One does not have to look far to find this style of dixieland on recordings. Listen to any of the fine Eddie Condon Bands, those bands led by Art Hodes, bands led by Wild Bill Davidson or Tommy Saunders, or *The World's Greatest Jazz Band.*

Even though they are not geographically near Chicago or New York, Pete Fountain has played this style of music in New Orleans, as has Bob Schulz's *Frisco Jazz Band* on the West Coast.

3. Uptown New Orleans Archaic. The style of dixieland which reaches back farthest to the influence of African blues and folk music is the "jass" played by black and Creole musicians in the early 1900s in the rougher portions of New Orleans Uptown, including the Storyville tenderloin district.

In the 1920s many of the more skilled early jazz players dispersed across the country, and because they played more

sophisticated jazz, this early style was largely forgotten, sustained by a few traditional musicians in New Orleans. To modern ears accustomed to the precision of the *Dukes of Dixieland* and enhanced recording techniques, the Uptown style sounds primitive and a bit out-of tune.

This music was revived in the 1940s by a dedicated group of early jazz afficianados when cornet player Bunk Johnson was brought out of retirement. Clarinet player George Lewis, who had been struggling for years in New Orleans, was finally raised to prominence with Bunk's all-star and, and the early uptown style was promoted as "The Real Jazz" by French jazz writer Huges Panassié.

The style relies on early New Orleans tunes such as Buddy *Bolden's Blues*, *My Bucket's Got A Hole In It*, *Didn't He Ramble*, and *All the Girls Go Crazy*. The music is usually learned by rote, played by ear, directed by hand signals in simple routines, and stresses ensemble playing with a minumum of extended solos.

To play with an Uptown New Orleans style group, your skills should include:

1. An earthy tone, perhaps with vibrato.

2. The ability to invent counterpoint, essentially three-part polyphony.

3. Ability to participate in extemporaneous backgrounds and riff choruses.

4. Ability to play the blues with conviction and emotion.

Exceptional technique is not essential, nor are advanced soloing skills. These bands stay in a few standard keys, seldom modulate, and usually have a straight four-beat rhythm pattern on the banjo.

Today, the Uptown New Orleans style is most identified with *The Preservation Hall Jazz Band*.

There have been several generations of Preservation Hall jazz bands whch all exemplify the early archaic New Orleans style of jazz. Many recordings are available.

4. West Coast Revival. In California in the early 1940s, the Lu Watters *Yerba Buena Jazz Band* established the signature West Coast Revival style. Like King Oliver's *Creole Jazz Band*, West Coast Revival bands usually include two cornets, a trombone and a clarinet in the front line. The back line typically includes a tuba, banjo and piano. However, the Lu Watters sound is significantly louder and more rhythmically insistent than the older King Oliver approach.

West Coast Revival repertoire includes a mix of early dixieland standards, many multi-strain, and "new old" tunes composed in the 40s and 50s such as *Big Bear Stomp* and *Annie Street Rock*.

Seattle's Uptown Lowtown Jazz Band plays a powerful West Coast style with a mix of four horns, including cornet, trombone, clarinet, and a variety of saxophones. In the Lu Watters and Turk Murphy tradition, they do not use a drummer.

Another very popular band in California in the early 50s was the *Firehouse Five Plus Two* which featured George Probert on the soprano saxophone. If you play soprano sax, this gives you an authentic period sound, and also the ability to complete with a loud brass front line. West Coast bands sometimes incorporate bass saxophone and alto saxophone into the mix.

To play with a West Coast Revival style group, your skills should include:

1. A powerful tone.

2. The ability to learn the West Coast repertoire and standard harmonies.

3. Good technique and solo abilities.

Today, some of the powerful bands which continue this tradition in their own ways include the *Devil Mountain Jazz Band*, the *Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band*, and *Cornet Chop Suey.*

5. British Trad. After World War II, the English were reminded of early jazz once again and began to study the remaining old guard of New Orleans musicians who were still alive. Soon, their own version of Uptown New Orleans jazz emerged, and spread across the British Empire to Canada, Scotland, New Zealand, and Australia.

The Climax Jazz Band of Toronto, Canada, is a classic example of British Trad, with a back line of banjo, upright bass, and drums, and a front line of cornet, trombone, and clarinet or soprano saxophone. There is no piano.

British Trad bands usually have a banjo as the main chordal instrument playing in an insistent 4/4 beat. There may be no piano. String bass is common as the bass instrument. This gives British Trad bands an open sound, which allows more room for clarinet harmonies and embellishments to be heard.

Frequently British Trad bands will play a simple tune like *Bye and Bye* or *There's an Old Spinning Wheel* with many variations and subtlties, gradually building dynamics and intensities, ofter giving multiple solo choruses for seven to ten minutes.

For the instrumentalist, the skills needed are very similar to those of Uptown New Orleans archaic. A good British Trad player will also have:

1. Superior soloing skills.

2. The ability to invent a long series of choruses with variations.

3. A sensitivity to dynamics.

The best way to get the difference is to listen to the classic recordings of Chris Barber, Monty Sunshine, Kenny Ball, and to the work of *The Golden Eagle Jazz Band*, *Climax Jazz Band,* and *Grand Dominion Jazz Band*.

Other less common dixieland styles. As you begin to dig into the history of dixieland, you will notice some famous bands which played in styles that you do not hear played today. Tex Wyndham notes these two styles in his book *Texas Shout*:

White New Orleans. Even though white dixieland groups such as the *Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, *New Orleans Rhythm Kings*, and the *Original Memphis Five* burst on the scene, recorded, and enjoyed broad popularity in the Roaring Twenties, today we find few bands that play consistently in their style. The most prominent is Dan Levinson's *Roof Garden Jass Band,* which is able to re-create live, note-for-note, many of the classic and obscure recordings of that time, thanks to Dan's impeccable arrangements.

Downtown New Orleans. The more advanced black bands who worked in the classier establishments of downtown New Orleans were also the first to move to Chicago, New York, and California as jazz became popular. These bands were noted for excellent technique and advanced routines or "head arrangements." Famous bands in this class include Joe Oliver's *Creole Jazz Band*, *Ory's Sunshine Orchestra*, Jelly Roll Morton's *Red Hot Peppers*, Sidney Bechet's *New Orleans Feetwarmers*, and Louis Armstrong's *Hot Five* and *Hot Seven* (the last two being primarily recording studio bands.)

Possibly because of the virtuosity and discipline needed to play in this style, modern bands may play the repertoire of these great groups, but may not work out every number as tightly as the orginal bands did. In truth, Louis Armstrong himself abandoned this style in the 1930s, only coming back to a looser small group with his *All-Stars* in the 1950s, whose routines were then much closer to Chicago style than Downtown New Orleans.

Playing lead in early jazz.

Playing straight lead. Early jazz still values the melody of a composition, and it is usually appropriate to play a straight, accurate rendition of the melody during the first chorus of a tune. That is especially true if the song you are playing is a venerable favorite of the audience, such as *Amazing Grace* or *Stardust.* This doesn't mean that you can't give a familiar melody your own stylistic emphasis, but you should stay close to the written melody line, because the audience is probably singing or humming along with you.

Dave Tatrow, shown here with Wally's Warehouse Waifs, plays the punchy style of cornet lead that beginning players would do well to emulate.

The open or punchy lead. When you are playing lead and have another horn playing harmony with you, then you need to think like a hot jazz cornetist. The basic rule is this: Play with a more "punchy" short style to leave room for the other horn, or horns, to respond and play fills. In contrast to concert band syle, you do not need to hold half notes and whole notes to full value (don't tell your concert band director I said this.) To get a feeling for this style of lead, listen to recordings with Wild Bill Davison or Ernie Carson on cornet lead.

Embellishing the melody. After the first chorus in early jazz, the lead instrument can feel free to move farther and farther away from the melody, in many ways. Shown below is a simple example of the way a jazz lead player might "personalize" the melody to *Bill Bailey*:

Notice some of the techniques:

• Using pickup notes or runs to enter a phrase.

• Moving the rhythmic emphasis from a strong beat to a weak beat.

• Shifting the melody forward (anticipating) or backward (laying back.)

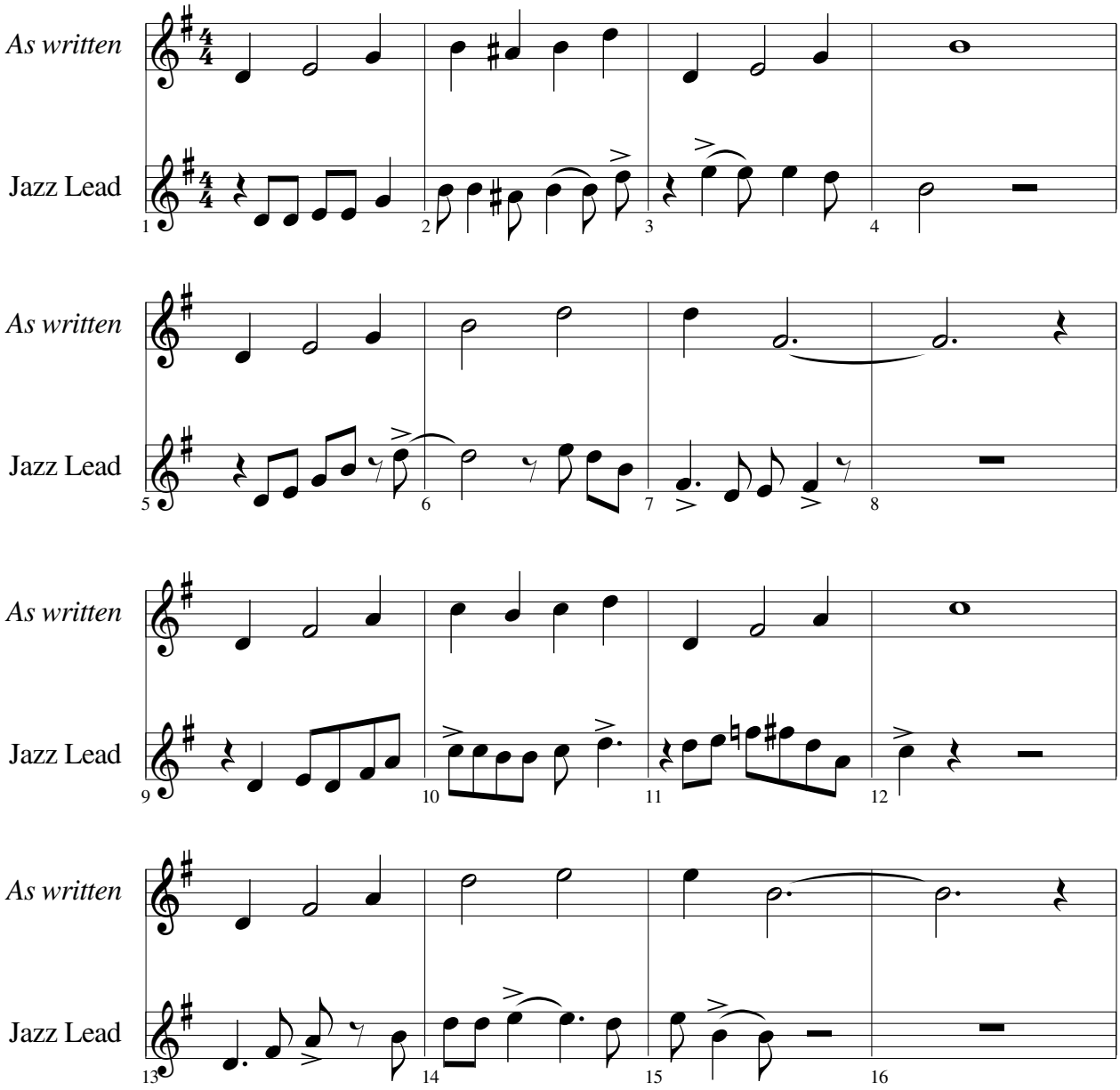
• Simplifying the melody, or recasting parts of it.

• Adding notes within the chords or chordal scales of the composition.

Embellishing a melody is a very personal skill, and does not follow any set formula. It is the result of musical experience, knowledge of chords, a good ear, and the inspiration of the player.

The primary difference between melodic embellishment and a pure jazz solo is that the original melody is still delineated in some way.

Jazz Lead Style (Bill Bailey chorus, first half)



Concert F
Transposed for
Bb Instruments.

Annotating jazz. As Gunther Schuller repeatedly mentions in his books on jazz, our Western music notation falls short of giving a good picture of the subtleties of jazz articulation and micro-timing. The suggested jazz phrasing in the above example needs to be played with a jazz swing feeling as discussed later in Chapter 13.

Jazz as recorded can be transcribed more precisely, but it then requires some tricky dotted thirty-second notes and rests, requiring a very advanced reader to perform it.

Ensemble roles in early jazz.

Each instrument has a specific role in the dixieland ensemble, which varies somewhat depending on the size of the band and the style of early jazz being played.

There were typically two types of bands in turn-of-the-century New Orleans: indoor bands and outdoor bands.

Indoor bands were often led by a violinist and were hired for dancing. Instrumentation might include violin, cornet, Bb clarinet, trombone, guitar, string bass and trap set. Dynamics were quieter, and the clarinet could play comfortably in the low register.

Outdoor bands were normally marching bands with cornet, trombone, tuba, bass drum, snare drum, banjo and clarinets. Often the smaller Eb clarinet was used to scream over the powerful brass ensemble. These were parade bands, and unlike today, rarely played indoors for dancing.

The Reynolds Brothers are two brilliant musicians who can perform as a duo or add horns to make a larger band.

Despite the common notion that a dixieland band must have six pieces, small groups have always been a part of jazz, going back to the earliest days in New Orleans where they were called "short bands." The leader, that is, the band member contracting the job, would hire as many, or few players as the budget allowed. And because the economics of live music are always shaky, plenty of short bands will be found today.

Two-piece bands. Perhaps the finest band of this type today is that of Guy Van Duser, guitar, and Billy Novick, clarinet, called simply *Guy and Billy*. These brilliant players make an astonishing amount of music. While the guitar is playing rhythm and chords, the clarinet is called upon to play the lead, then to play jazz solos, and finally to play back-up parts while the guitar is soloing. I recommend their CDs highly. You might also refer to duo CDs recorded by pianist Dick Wellstood and clarinetist Kenny Davern.

The original Milneburg Jazz Band lineup, just three players.

Three-piece bands. The trio format, with one horn, bass, and banjo/guitar/piano is another short band option. The horn player still needs to know the lead to every tune, and to be able to solo. But the ensemble load is divided between the string/bass and the chordal instrument. In my regular performances with the *Milneburg Jazz Band* (banjo, bass, clarinet/soprano sax) I found that the soprano saxophone came in handy to provide a change of texture, to cover the Sidney Bechet repertoire, and also to provide a punchy lead for Louis Armstrong favorites such as *Struttin' With Some Barbeque*, *Dippermouth Blues*, and *Mahogany Hall Stomp*.

Four-piece bands. When the music buyer can afford four players, the leader has more options. For example, I regularly play in bands of cornet, clarinet, banjo and tuba. The horns get many solo opportunities.

If music is being played for dancing, the four-piece combo might change to one horn (saxophone, trumpet or trombone), piano, bass and drums. While not dixieland style, the famous Benny Goodman quartets used clarinet, piano, vibraphone, and drums.

Five-piece bands. The *Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, being the first jazz band to record, defined the early instrumentaton: cornet, clarinet, trombone, piano and drums. It is worth noting that there was no banjo and no tuba is this archetypal ensemble.

An historic photo of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Five pieces, no banjo, no tuba, apparently not a real piano either. But they set the world on fire, and no one seemed to miss the shortage of players.

The piano and drums provided all the chordal and rhythm background, while the horns took on roles which reached back to Western African music.

The "B" side of their first recording was a tune called *Livery Stable Blues* (also *Barnyard Blues*). In the solo breaks, the clarinet mimics a rooster crow, the cornet whinnies like a horse, and trombone moos like a bull. Jazz musicians today find this comparison to be unbearably corny, but as Gunther Schuller writes in *Early Jazz*, it springs from the traditions of African music which found their way to New Orleans.

So there you have it. In dixieland, the clarinet plays the role of the bird. The facile clarinetist can play many notes quickly, play high notes in the range of bird calls—in other words, the clarinet can flit about and embellish in ways that are beyond the average cornetist and trombonist.

By virtue of its power, the cornet (or trumpet) plays the role of the stallion—strong, dashing, dominating, leading. Because cornetists tend to have those personality traits as well, the cornetist is traditionally the band leader in dixieland. (Note that there are many happy exceptions to this rule, because while the cornetist in question may be a fine lead player and soloist, he or she may not have a good sense of what tunes to call, or how to set the right tempo.) The cornetist also is usually the "stage director" because he can play with one hand, and give signals with the other. The trombonist and clarinetist have both hands tied up.

The trombone is relegated to the baritone voice role, and plays a "tailgate" counterpoint in most styles of dixieland. But the lower register of the clarinet and the trombone can blend very nicely, as can be heard often in recordings of the trio of *High Society*.

The Bridgetown Sextet, show here with guest vocalist Marilyn Keller at the 2013 Seaside Jazz Festival, was, yes, six pieces as the name implies.

The High Sierra Jazz Band is actually a seven-piece band. Drummer Charlie Castro is hidden behind trombonist Howard Miyata.

Six-piece bands. It is hard to pinpoint exactly when the six-piece band became the standard dixieland ensemble, but today, that is what most people think of when dixieland is mentioned.

As in the early five piece bands, the front line is usually cornet, clarinet, trombone. The back line can vary. Indoors it might be drums, piano, and string bass. Outdoors it might be washboard, banjo and tuba.

The clarinet is responsible for the high harmonies and busy embellishment. It is also traditional for the clarinet to take the first jazz solo, although there is no musical reason this should be so.

A sensitive brass section will know how to control its dynamics so it can blend. The more skilled bands have always known how to accomplish this so the clarinet part is not buried.

If the band is inherently loud, or if it lacks dynamic restraint, the clarinet should play on a microphone if a sound system is available.

Seven-piece bands. With the addition of a second cornet, or an alto or tenor saxophone, a band's volume increases and the clarinet must often fight even harder to be heard.

It is also much harder for the fourth horn player to find a note in ensemble passages that is not already covered, which explains why when bands get larger than three horns, they often resort to written charts for the ensemble passages to avoid complete chaos.

Larger bands. Larger ragtime or jazz ensembles, such as James Reese Europe's Army *Hellfighters* band of WWI, about 30 pieces, apparently memorized their arrangements, much like a modern college marching band. When a band reaches that size, written arrangements are essential.

CHAPTER 10

Special instrumental jazz effects.

Because many early black jazz horn players were self taught, and also had a heritage of West African music, there are several special effects identified with jazz. However, remember that using these effects does not suddenly make you a fine jazz player.

They are most useful when playing the blues, when a lowdown or dirty effect is desired. Early New Orleans players possessed an African sense of pitch, and often played the "blue notes" in the blues a quarter tone flat to European ears.

The most common effects are:

- **Vibrato**
- **The growl.**
- **The swoop.**
- **The dip.**
- **The glissando.**

It is best to reserve these effects for occasional, not habitual, use. (Also remember never to use these effects in a concert band situation or near your instrument teacher.)

- **Vibrato.** Jazz horn players often use a little *terminal vibrato* at the longer notes. A few use the continuous and wide vibrato of Sidney Bechet, but this is out of style today.
- **The growl.** To growl, simply hum into the mouthpiece at the same time you blow the instrument. You can hum the same note your instrument is sounding, or a different one. Experiment.
- **The swoop.** In this case, the horn starts the note below pitch and quickly lips it up to pitch. Use it sparingly.
- **The dip.** The note is approached on pitch, and then lipped below pitch and back up. This creates musical tension and perhaps suggests emotional involvement. However, it can also become a music cliché.
- **The glissando.** With practice, cornets and clarinets can create a seamless portamento glissando of an octave or more, usually moving from a low note to a high note. There are different techniques, and it does take some practice and experimentation to sound like a slide trombone on other instruments.

CHAPTER 11

Performance tips, tension and attitude.

There are times for many musicians when playing an instrument becomes a struggle. For me, this has been especially true when playing in community concert bands and orchestras, but it can also happen when trying to master a difficult jazz solo.

Physically, playing an instrument at a high level requires hours of practice, which can breed tension in the embouchure, neck, arms, fingers, and back. The player must take regular breaks, and do stretching exercises or yoga to keep from knotting up.

Psychologically, the player needs to become mentally and emotionally centered and to cultivate a positive attitude about performing. Books that I highly recommend are *The Inner Game of Music* by Barry Green, *Free Play* by Stephen Nachmanovitch, and *Effortless Mastery* by Kenny Werner.

The legitimate classical player becomes seriously engaged in performing the composer's intent, with both great precision and understanding, usually with the filtering interpretation of a demanding director. If this is your life's work, then it can be very fulfilling. I am sad to say that it has not always been a positive experience for me.

However, playing early jazz has been very liberating and joyful. Most of the time, it has been downright fun, and it should be. Some of this comes from the ebullient personalities of other jazz musicians. Some of it springs from the dixieland jazz environment, which usually has a carefree and party atmosphere. And much of it grows out of the freedom to create one's own music.

All music is performed best when the players are prepared, comfortable, happy, and relaxed, but this is especially true of dixieland jazz. As you work your way through this book, and the exercises it recommends, you should find enough little breakthroughs to keep you enthusiastic.

If learning to play your horn seems too formidable a challenge, or if the work becomes a grind, then you need to put away this book for a few days, find a dixieland jazz festival or jazz society, go meet some experienced dixieland musicians or sympathetic musical friends, and just blow your horn for a while.

CHAPTER 12

Hand signals on stage.

Two flats, Conc. Bb

Concert C

Your solo

No solo please

Split solo choruses

Trade fours

It may seem confusing when a reading musician first joins a traditional Chicago-style band or jam session, because the musicians seem to have a secret language and unstated expectations. It is useful to understand some of the hand signals and traditional routines that have become embedded in this type of music. Typically the cornet player leads the band, and gives the hand signals, simply because he can play with one hand and give signals with the other.

When playing dixieland, it's bad to get in the habit of playing with your eyes closed, either in solos or ensemble sections, because most of the conducting is done with eye contact and hand signals.

Common hand signals.

The concert key of a song (or key change for the next chorus) is indicated by the number of fingers held out. The number of fingers held down indicates the number of flats in a key signature. Two fingers held down indicate Concert Bb. Concert C is usually indicated by making a "zero" or "C" with two fingers. The sharp in Concert G would be indicated by extending up one finger, although that is not a common key in most dixieland jams.

Your solo. When the trumpet player points at you, it means the next solo will be yours. (Don't jump in immediately; wait until the current chorus is complete.)

I don't want one. If you don't want to solo, just give a "no" sign with your palm, or shake your head no.

Take two. When two fingers are held up, that means to take two complete solo choruses. This occurs usually on fast tunes in which choruses are very short, so it gives the solo player a chance to stretch out.

Half solos. The "X" sign, with crossed hands or crossed fingers means to split the solos in half and share them. In other words, instead of a 16-bar solo, you play 8 bars and pass it on to the next soloist. This happens often in large jam sets to allow everyone to have a short solo.

Trade fours (or twos). When one player establishes eye contact with another player, holds up four fingers, and points them back and forth between the two players, it indicates, "Let's trade four-bar solo phrases" or "Trade fours." Of course, you can do the same thing with two fingers to indicate trading two bar phrases, although this is trickier to pull off.

Play ensemble

Last chorus

Go to the top

Get down, quieter

One down, one up

Four bar break

Stop time beat

Everyone in. When the cornet player holds up one finger and moves it in a "round-up" circle, it means, "Everyone in, this is an ensemble chorus." This is usually the sign to end solo choruses.

Last chorus. A fist held up means "this is the last chorus." Go out at the end.

Go to the top. Touching an open palm to the top of the head means, "Go to the top," which usually indicates going back to the verse, first stanza, or sometimes even to the introduction of the tune.

Get down. A flat hand held down at knee level indicates that the next chorus is going to be played in a restrained style, at a pianissimo level. This may also be called a "chatter" chorus.

One down/one up. As a band is nearing the last ensemble choruses, the cornet may give a hand signal, pointing down with one finger, then up. That means to play a quiet and restrained chorus, followed by a loud and exuberant final chorus.

Four bar drum break. When four fingers are held up to the drummer, usually in the final chorus of a tune, that indicates that the drummer (or banjo, or piano) is to take a four-bar extemporaneous solo, followed by the band playing a variation on the final four bars of the song. It is critical to listen to the cornet player to catch the shape of these last four bars.

Stop time. One common way to indicate that the band is to play only on the first beat of each measure, is to hold both fists up like you are doing a pull-up, then pull them down on the desired beat. This technique is usually used to accompany a drum solo, with the horns playing harmony quarter notes on the signal.

Sequence of solos. The traditional sequence of solos in dixieland has been clarinet, cornet, trombone, rhythm instruments. It does not have to be this way, but in general, most cornet players like to have a chorus to rest their chops after the first ensemble and before their solo chorus, and also a rest break before the final (out) chorus or choruses. As mentioned earlier, the sequence is usually indicated by the cornet player catching the eye of the players during the solo sequence, and pointing to each of them, and to himself, to indicate the solo sequence.

CHAPTER 13

Early jazz rhythms and articulation.

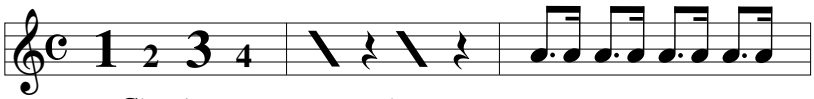
A collection of West African drums and rattles in the Kura Hulanda Slave Museum in Curacao. Early jazz was strongly influenced by commerce with the West Indies.

Rhythm is what differentiates early jazz from other types of music. Jazz began as dance music. Even if the Creoles and African Blacks of New Orleans were marching in a parade, they were dancing. And to this day, the best dixieland has drive, a clear dance pulse, and a sense of *swing*.

European. The European light classical music that jazz drew from has a much different feeling. In 4/4 time, the emphasis is on the strong beats, 1 and 3, and that is where most people of European extraction will clap their hands along with music.

Eighth notes in European marches, polkas, and schottisches are usually well separated, in the dotted eighth/sixteen note pattern shown below.

European Pulse



Clapping Pulse Eighth Note Feel

This is the style played by most legitimate reading orchestras of the period, and is generally considered stiff, corny, or "rickey-tick" by jazz musicians.

Ragtime. Ragtime music is misnamed. The term came from the epithet "ragged time," but the beat of ragtime music is not irregular, it is the syncopated figures that are played over the pulse and across the bar lines that give its rhythmic interest. Compared to European light classical music, the underlying pulse of ragtime is comparatively unaccented.

Unaccented Pulse

Clapping Pulse Eighth Note Feel

As Jelly Roll Morton said, "Ragtime is a certain type of syncopation and only certain tunes can be played in that idea. But jazz is a style that can be applied to any type of tune." If you listen to some of the earliest recorded jazz examples mentioned in this book, you will notice a progression from about 1917 to about 1930 from the rather straight ragtime beat and crisp articulation, to a more relaxed African feel called *swing* with a laid back rhythm and legato style.

Swing. So how do we define swing? Gunther Schuller, the most musically qualified author on the subject of jazz, discusses swing at length in his important books, *Early Jazz*

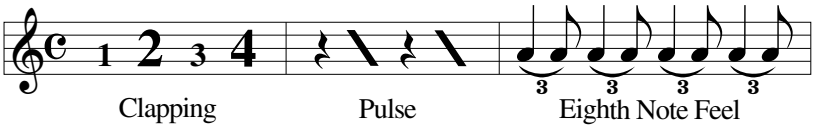
and *The Swing Era*. Two important elements of swing are the "type of inflection and accentuation with which notes are played" and "the forward propelling directionality" with which notes are linked to gether.

Swing has a strong African influence. An African-American audience, or a knowledgeable jazz audience, will clap along with jazz music on the off beats, 2 and 4.

Eighth notes in jazz with a "swing feel" are given a 2/3 to1/3 relative value, and usually are played semi-legato.

There is no substitute for a drummer who understands tempo and keeps the band on track. In this case, the drummer is the popular Ron Leach.

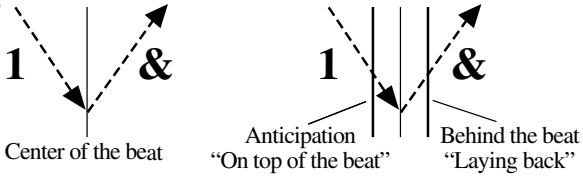
Swing Pulse



Still, I recommend listening to bands led by Eddie Condon or Count Basie to get a feel for swing. You must *feel* the rhythm to be able to play it, or as Louis Armstrong said in many different interviews, if you have to ask what swing is, you ain't ever gonna know.

Where's the beat? In a concert band, it is presumed that the center of the beat (**1**) occurs at the bottom the conductor's baton down stroke, and the second half of the beat (**&**) happens at the end of the up stroke.

Beat Subdivisions



Jazz players regularly and intentionally violate this rule. Max Kaminsky, a fine lead cornetist, stated simply that for jazz to have drive and energy, the lead player must anticipate slightly, or stay "on top of the beat."

On the other hand, many jazz soloists and vocalists will place their notes slightly after the center of the beat, which is called playing "behind the beat" or "laying back."

Rushing and dragging. In the above examples, no matter where the lead player, soloist, or vocalist may be, the underlying pulse (tempo) of the rhythm section must remain the same. An inexperienced or unskilled rhythm section may mistake the anticipation or laying back as a change in the tempo, and follow the front line player or vocalist, resulting in speeding up (rushing) or slowing down (dragging) of the basic tempo. Better rhythm sections understand these principles and will not rush or drag.

CHAPTER 14

A brief introduction to music theory.

"Wait a minute!" you are saying. "I just wanted to play a little jazz, not jump into a complex and weighty topic like music theory."

The truth is that basic understanding of the structure of Western music (music theory) is fundamental to playing a jazz instrument. In the beginning, all music began as folk music, and was played naturally and intuitively by every human culture. Then the ancient Greeks began to grasp the underlying mathematical relationships, and thanks to Pythagorus, developed the foundations for the music that we play today, although there have been quite a few tweaks and theoretical improvements in the past two thousand years.

The octave. Pythagorus discovered when comparing plucked strings, that one half as long as his original string (1:2 proportion) sounded an *octave* (eight notes) above it. From modern physics, we know it was vibrating at twice the frequency. All types of music worldwide recognize the special similar character of octave tones.

The fifth and fourth. Pythagorus also found that a string with a 2:3 proportion resulted at a *fifth* interval, a harmony which sounded very pleasant to ancient ears. A string with a 3:4 proportion resulted in the harmony note called a *fourth*. While we don't play exactly the same frequencies today as the ancient Greeks did, these three tonal centers, *tonic* (also called I), the *fourth* (also called IV), and the *fifth* (also called V) are important building blocks for Western music, especially the folk, jazz, and popular music we want to play.

The twelve tone scale. The ancient Greeks divided up the space between a note and its octave into twelve tones, based on simple Pythagorean mathematic ratios. However, as keyboard instruments such as the organ and piano were developed in the seventeenth century, musicians found that playing in different key centers resulted in extreme dissonances, and ultimately the musical world accepted the tuning of *equal temperment.* Today, when we play all twelve tones in a scale sequence, that is called a *chromatic* scale, with twelve half steps, and each half step has precisely the same harmonic distance between the note above and below. We'll discuss the basic types of scales you need learn for jazz in the next chapter.

As I have said, jazz is a folk music that can be, and should be, played from the heart by almost anyone. But by the fourteenth century, music grew into a profession, and like

any guild of the time, created its own terminology, methods, and trade secrets. The conservatory trained musician has ever since looked down on self-taught folk musicians, including country folk singers, western fiddlers, blues singers, klezmer players and dixieland musicians.

Even so, these styles of music do generally adhere to classical scales, chords and harmonic progressions, even if they were handed down as traditional tunes rather than as formal, intellectually formed compositions.

The most friendly and accessible way to grasp the basics of music theory that I have found is Michael Miller's book, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Music Theory*. I recommend it very highly, because it will clarify the many questions you probably have that cannot be covered in this book, and it will aid your progress to the next levels of performance.

If you try to learn music theory from a first year college music theory textbook, you will find it filled with jargon, rules, complex harmonic discussions, and a presumption of keyboard skills. It almost seems that the writers desire to keep music theory as arcane and difficult as possible. Still, as you become more advanced, you may want to pursue the academic study of music.

I should mention here that some of the most important figures in popular music, including Irving Berlin, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Paul McCartney, never took a conservatory class in music theory. They simply played and composed "their music," and in the process, violated many "rules" of music theory.

Keyboard skills. As mentioned elsewhere, if you can play piano or electronic keyboard, it can be a big help in learning chords, their relationships, and in composing and arranging.

However, for our purposes, you still must learn your scales and chords on your instrument to become a fluent jazz solist. You do not have time to stop and think, "How do I play an F chord?" The moment you see an F chord indicated on a lead sheet, you must automatically have the notes F•A•C under your fingers.

Unfortunately, if you double on instruments, such as clarinet and saxophone, or cornet and trombone, you'll need to learn your chords and practice them on *both* instruments.

CHAPTER 15

An introduction to scales.

"Oh, no! I wanted to play dixieland, and now you have me learning scales just like my classical teacher!" Sorry, but you really need some facility on your instrument to play scales if you hope to play jazz. The good news is that early jazz does not range into keys with many sharps or flats, so you can get started by learning a relatively small number of easy scales.

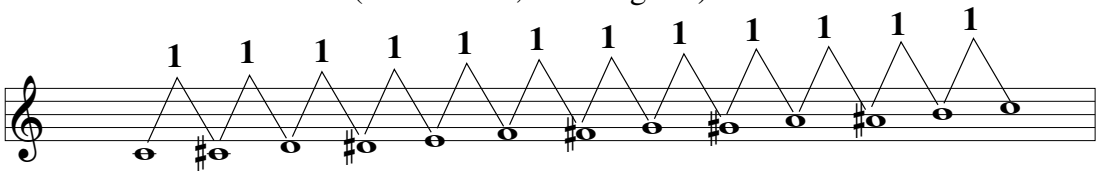
The chromatic scale. This is an important place to start because it will acquaint you with all the notes on your instrument and their note names. You will need a fingering chart from a method book for your instrument.

For convenience, I am showing a C chromatic scale below, in treble clef, and with the enharmonic notes with both flat and sharp note names.

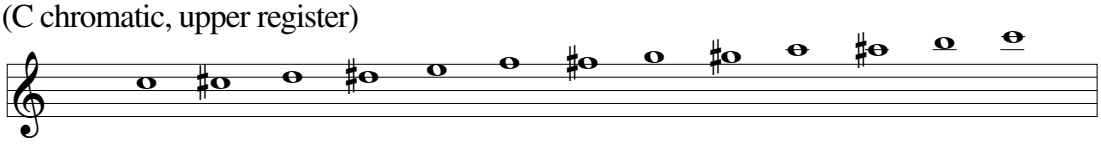
You'll notice that in the chromatic scale each note is separated by one *semitone* (one half step) equally throughout. While this scale contains all possible notes, there is not a feeling of a strong tonal center as in the other types of scales we are about to discuss.

I realize that trombone and tuba/bass normally read parts in the bass clef. However, as a practical matter in early jazz, it useful to also read in also in treble clef, because the player is very likely to encounter lead sheets in treble clef.

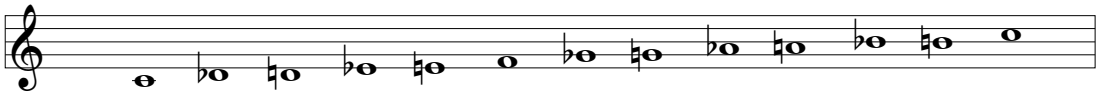
Chromatic Scale Intervals (C chromatic, lower register)



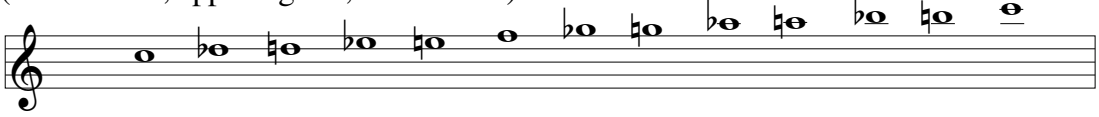
(C chromatic, upper register)



(C chromatic, lower register, enharmonic)



(C chromatic, upper register, enharmonic)



Why the diatonic scale? At some point, even though the chromatic scale is the underlying scale of Western music, our culture standardized on scales with eight notes (seven

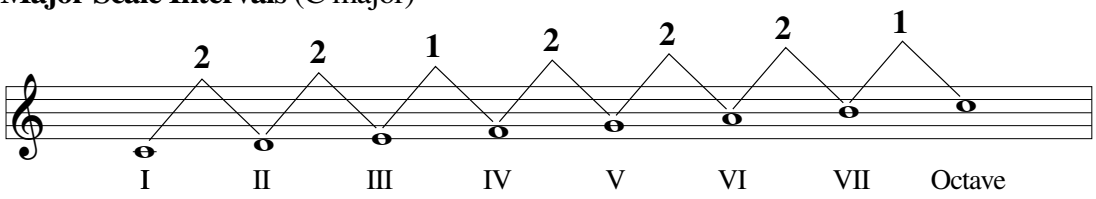
notes plus the octave note.) The most common version is the diatonic major scale we all know in solfège as *do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do*.

Scholars are not entirely sure how Western music arrived at its present scheme of diatonic scales, although it is probable that under the Pythagorean scale which was based on perfect fifth intervals, early stringed instruments were naturally easier to tune in a series of fifths. In any case, these scales now just "sound right" to our ears.

To play early jazz, it is useful to have memorized diatonic scales in common keys. Pentatonic and blues scales, explained later, are also useful in jazz improvising.

Major scales. In the gradual development of Western music over the past 25 centuries, musical tastes and sensitivies have changed significantly. In the Middle Ages, the music of the Christian church relied on eight-note *modes* as its basis, sung in unison or very simple harmonies. The church mode called *Ionian* became our major scale. It is called *diatonic* because of the uneven pattern of half tone steps between the notes. (See wikipedia.com for a more complete explanation of diatonic tuning.) Here is a C major scale:

Major Scale Intervals (C major)



As the example shows, the notes of a major scale are separated by semitones in a pattern of 2,2,1,2,2,2,1 pattern. The scale notes can be numbered for relative reference to the tonic note of C; either 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 (8 would be the octave), or in Roman numerals, I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII as I've done here.

Major scales suggest a pleasant and cheery feeling. They're the basic building blocks of much of our music, so you need to learn them first. Fortunately, you can start playing early jazz after you have learned just a few scales.

Minor scales. Here is where music theory can become both complex and confusing, because there are three types of minor scales. Fortunately, the beginning dixieland player does not need to master them all, and I refer you to Michael Miller's Music Theory book for a complete explanation of the Melodic minor and Harmonic minor scales.

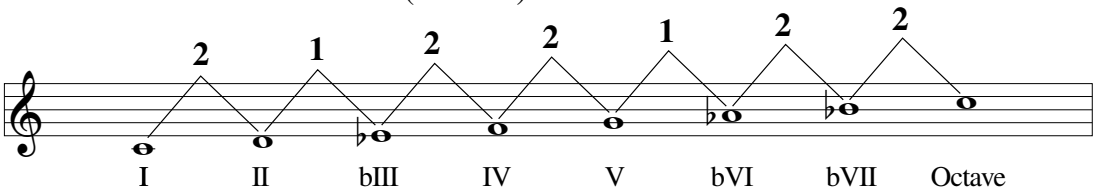
It is certainly important to understand the Natural minor scale, because it is the basis for building the minor chords

that appear in nearly every early jazz composition.

The natural minor scale has the same intervals as the *Aeolian* church mode, with semitone intervals of 2,1,2,2,1,2,2 between notes.

Our ears are familiar with this scale in the music of the Middle East and Eastern Europe, as found in Hebrew, Klezmer and Gypsy music. For whatever cultural reason, minor scales sound slightly sad to our ears.

Natural Minor Scale Intervals (C minor)



Note in the above example that the third of the scale is now flatted, are as are the sixth and seventh notes. These notes will be important as we discuss building chords in the next chapter.

There are many compositions in jazz which alternate between a major and minor feel, sometimes between the verse and chorus, and sometimes within a single strain, so minor scales should be your second focus of learning.

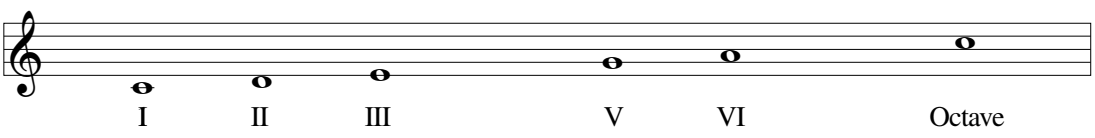
Pentatonic scales. Many cultures have built scales using only five notes (*penta* is five in Latin.) They are found in Western African music, and likely had an influence on African-America folk music and early jazz.

We use a version of the pentatonic scale which uses notes that fit the pitches of a major scale. It includes the first, second, third, fifth and sixth notes of the scale.

When you play only the black notes on a piano, you are playing a pentatonic scale in the key of C# Concert. You will find notes from the pentatonic scale making up the melodies of songs such *Amazing Grace* and *Blue Skies*. They are also widely used in country and western music.

The pentatonic scales are especially valuable to a beginning jazz soloist, because if you play any combination of those five notes against the major scale or chord of the same key, they will fit well.

Pentatonic Scale (C pentatonic)



As we have said elsewhere, some harmony or solo notes in early jazz make us comfortable, and some create levels of dissonance that create tension and discomfort. Knowing your pentatonic scales (really very easy—you just drop the fourth and seventh notes of a major scale) will help you play more "good" notes.

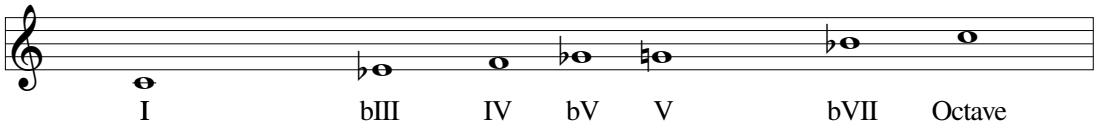
The blues scale. Again, the blues scale is an African-American invention which is very useful to the soloist when playing the twelve bar blues that is so common in early jazz.

The blues grew from traditional Black folk songs, and were usually played on the guitar. Early commentators who tried to transcribe the music were puzzled by the flatted thirds and fifths, which seemed strange to European ears.

To build a blues scale in any key, just use the root, flatted (minor) third, (perfect) fourth, flatted fifth, perfect fifth, and flatted (dominant) seventh. The flatted third and fifth reveal a strong African influence, and the flatted (dominant) seventh is an essential part of most blues chord changes.

As strange as this scale may seem, it tends to give the right feeling when these notes are played in any combination over blues chord changes.

Blues Scale (C blues)



Are you still with me? I hope the reader has been able to follow this highly simplified introduction to scales. In Chapter 17, I have included daily practice exercises which show the scales frequently used in early jazz, .

Meanwhile, go back and play these five types of scales on your instrument and read the chapter again if it is not clear. Then we'll move on to building the common chords you'll be using to play early jazz.

CHAPTER 16

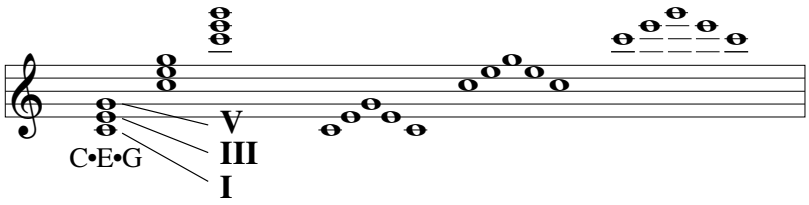
Building basic chords.

There are several fundamental things you must know about the construction of folk, early jazz, and many pop songs:
1. They have a *melody* line, and usually it is one that is memorable and easily singable.
2. The melody line is usually accompanied by one or more *chords*, defined as three or more notes played at the same time.
3. Most jazz songs have more than one chord.
4. Songs normally start on one tonal center (the tonic chord), then progress to other related chords (a chord progression) to create musical tension, and then return to the tonic chord.
5. Most folk, early jazz, and popular songs rely on a few, relatively simple chord structures.

If the above statements aren't clear to you, I again recommend Michael Miller's book on basic music theory. Of course, when you are playing a wind instrument, you can't play all the notes in the chord at once, so you must play them in sequence from bottom to top or top to bottom. That is called a chord *arpeggio*.

Major chords. Here's a C major chord *triad* (three notes) and the arpeggio notes you can play:

Major Chord and Arpeggio (C major)



(I realize that the third higher C•E•G may be beyond the range of saxes and cornets, but they are useful notes to clarinetists.)

A major chord is constructed by stacking a major third (four semitones) above the tonic note, and then a minor third (three semitones) above that, which is magically, a perfect fifth (seven semitones above the tonic.) Jazz musicians simply call the notes of the chord the 1, the major 3, and the 5, or I, III, and V.

Because the notes of major chords are based on notes from the major scale of the same name, they have a similar cheery character, and fit nicely with melodies made up of major scale notes.

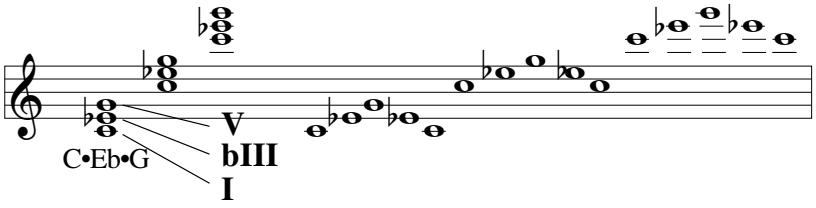
Major chords are indicated on lead sheets simply by the chord name in capital letters, in this case, **C**.

Minor chords. The other fundamental chord type in Western music is the minor chord. It is similar to a major triad, but the third is a flatted, or *minor third*. Even though the difference is slight, there is a big difference in feeling to the listener, which is often described as sad or exotic.

A minor chord is constructed by stacking a minor third (three semitones) above the tonic note, and then a major third (four semitones) above that. The fifth of the chord is still a perfect fifth, just as it is in a major chord, so if you have memorized your major triads, all you need to do is flatten the third, and you have a minor triad.

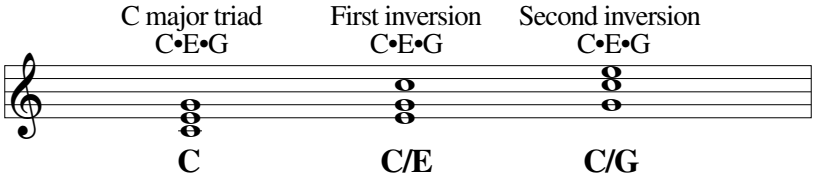
Here's a C minor chord and its arpeggios. It is usually notated as **Cm** on a lead sheet.

Minor Chord and Arpeggio (C minor)



Inversions. For some reason lost in the past, chords are identified by their note names, that is their *spelling*, even if the notes are played in a different arrangement as shown below. So if you are trying to identify a chord name by its note structure, you have to forget about which notes are top, middle, and bottom, and just say the note names. These are the possible variations of a C major chord:

Major Triad Inversions (C major)



The appropriate chord symbols are shown below each chord. C means normal voicing; C/E means the E is the bass note, and C/G means the G is the bass note. As confusing as this may seem at first, it is valuable information for horn players as you begin to play harmonies and solos. It means that you can play the arpeggio of a chord with the notes in any order, an octave above or below their original positions, and they will still fit in the chord.

[If you are paying attention, you might suggest that the first inversion above could also be annotated as an E minor 6th (-5), but the music theory world prefers the simpler approach shown above.]

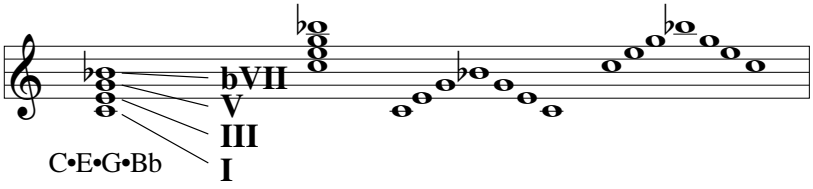
Major and minor triads provide a change of color to the chord progression, and they create more interest by varying the music. But musicians are a restless and inquisitive bunch, so over the past three hundred years we have added many additional chord types to improve the texture and richness of the music.

Fortunately, you don't need to know all of them at this point, but there are a few more that you will encounter as you start to play dixieland that you must understand.

Extended chords. If you as a composer desired even more coloration in a chord, you could keep stacking thirds on top of basic triads, to create chords with four, five, six or more notes, and that is exactly what happened. Thus you could make chords with additional notes that are the sixth, seventh, ninth, eleventh, or even thirteenth intervals away from the tonic note. You can easily try these combinations on a piano, but to start playing dixieland, you only need to know how to arpeggiate triads with a flatted (dominant) seventh added. As you advance in early jazz and swing music, you will also want to become familiar with sixth, major seventh, and ninth chords.

Dominant seventh chords. A few hundred years ago, classical composers began to add a fourth note to basic triads. The most common of these, called a seventh chord, stacks a flatted (minor) third on top of the fifth. It is called a dominant seventh. Here's a C major chord with a dominant seventh added, simply notated as a **C7**.

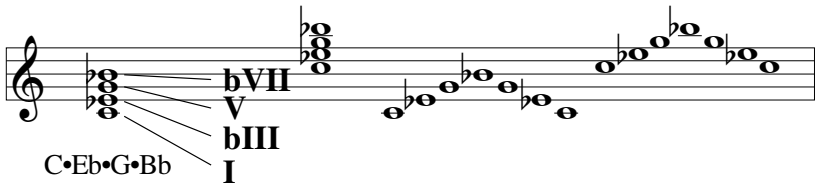
Dominant 7th Chord and Arpeggio (C major)



As a horn player, you will need to memorize the dominant seventh interval in each chord because it is essential to creating interesting harmony lines and solos. Seventh chords are found in virtually all early jazz, blues, and pop compositions.

Minor seventh chords. A dominant seventh note can also be added to a minor chord triad. While this is a less common chord in dixieland, if you have memorized your minor chords, and if you know the dominant seventh major chords, then you are nearly there. You simply flat the third of a **C7** and you have **Cm7**, as it is normally notated on a lead sheet. The chord and arpeggio are shown below.

Dominant 7th Chord and Arpeggio (C minor)

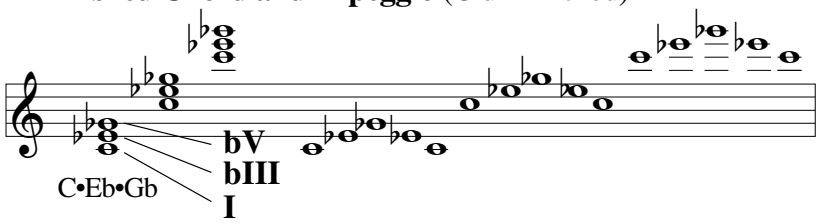


All the four basic types of chords we have just discussed, major triad, minor triad, seventh chord, and minor seventh chord, have a strong tonic center. As chords become more complex, or deviate from the normal triad structure, they are more likely to function as passing or transitional chords in early jazz. Here's an important example.

Diminished chords. As jazz was being invented in the early 1900s, progressive composers began using diminished chords as a "new" coloration. These chords found their way into jazz as well, often taking the place of a minor chord. As an example, the classic version of King Oliver's *Dippermouth Blues* begins with a series of descending diminished chord arpeggios.

In fact, the diminished chord is just a minor triad with a flatted fifth, spelled I, bIII, and bV. In other words, it is a series of stacked minor thirds. Here's the C diminished chord with arpeggios, usually anotated as **Cdim** or **C**°.

Diminished Chord and Arpeggio (C diminished)



The diminished chord has a more eerie feeling than a minor chord, and is used sparingly in early jazz, but when it is used, it is important to play the correct notes.

One curious feature of diminished chords is that if you stack another minor third onto the triad, you have a diminished seventh chord with equal minor third intervals. Keep adding minor thirds, and you have all the notes which spell the three basic diminished seventh chords.

You're almost ready to practice and play. If you understand this chapter, then you have a grasp of the five most common chord types you will encounter in early jazz compositions. But as I have suggested, there is much more to learn as you increase your repertoire.

CHAPTER 17

Scale and chord daily practice.

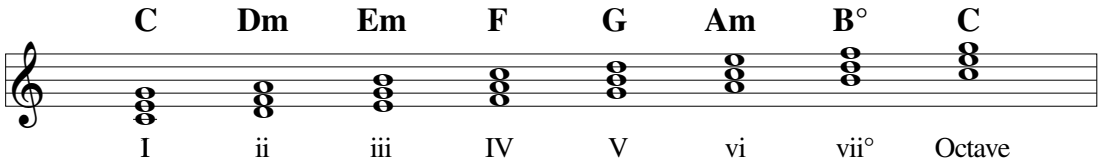
As the wise old jazzman said, "You play what you practice." In sum, that means that if you want to do a convincing job of playing the scales and chords found in popular songs, you must practice them, preferrably on a daily basis.

Your brain will then be able recall patterns of notes you regularly practice— melodies, arpeggios, chord sequences— and to retrieve them when you perform. It is that simple.

The daily practice exercises that follow should not be the *only* thing you work on. Certainly you will want to learn melodies to popular dixieland songs. You may want to work on technical exercises from your instrumental method books, especially in your weakest areas. You should certainly practice blowing long tones at varying dynamic levels, while watching your pitch with an electronic tuner. But these exercises will help you get common dixieland arpeggios and chord changes "under your fingers."

Scale-based chords. If you start with a diatonic scale such as C Major, and use only scale notes to build triads on each note of the scale, you arrive at a group of chords which look like this:

Scale-Based Chords (C major)



The specific chord name is noted above each triad, and the relative roman numeral name is below, upper case for chords having a major third, lower case for chords having a minor third.

Right away, you'll notice that the I chord, the IV chord, and the V chord are the only *major* chords which result from this construction. They are also the *primary* chords, and as we will see, are the most important chords in popular songs.

The 2, 3, and 6 chords are minor chords, while the 7 chord turns out to be a diminished chord, which is simply a reflection of the underlying mathematical structure of the diatonic scale. Trust me on this, or see Michael Miller's theory book.

If you practice these chord sequences in various keys as arpeggios on your instrument, while studying the chord names, you will begin to learn a lot of chords, develop finger patterns, and at the same time, you will develop your ear and sensitivity to basic triad sounds.

About the daily practice exercises. The following fourteen pages are copies of my daily instrumental practice sheets. These have been extracted from various instruction sources so I can't claim authorship.

I've called them "chords plus" because they not only help you learn chords on your instrument, but also related scales and basic chord sequences.

To get you started, I am just including sheets for the most common dixieland keys, which are: Concert Bb, Concert F, Concert Eb, Concert Ab, Concert C, and Concert G, both in treble clef and bass clef versions

Noted in the upper left corner is the transposition information for various instruments. I would refer you to Michael Miller's book on music theory for a complete explanation of why various instruments, because of their design, must transpose from the concert key. Saxophones may need to transpose some scales up an octave, but no matter what instrument you play, practice each key.

As with all exercises, you should practice them at various speeds, from slow to very fast. If you have one, use a metronome while practicing to improve your rhythm. You can also vary the articulation.

Line 1 teaches the I•IV•V chord progression which is found throughout blues, jazz, and rock music.

Line 2 is the major scale in that key.

Line 3 shows the notes of the common ii7•V7•I chord progression which is frequently found near the end of jazz and popular songs.

Line 4 shows the scales built on the ii7•V7•I chord progression. As it works out, the ii7 scale is in the *dorian* church mode, the V7 is in the *mixolydian* church mode, and the I scale is the common diatonic major scale, in the *ionian* mode as already mentioned. (You can throw these Latin terms around to impress your fellow musicians.)

Line 5 is a blues scale in that key. Please note that blues scales are normally notated in flats only, even when the tonic key is one with sharps in the key signature.

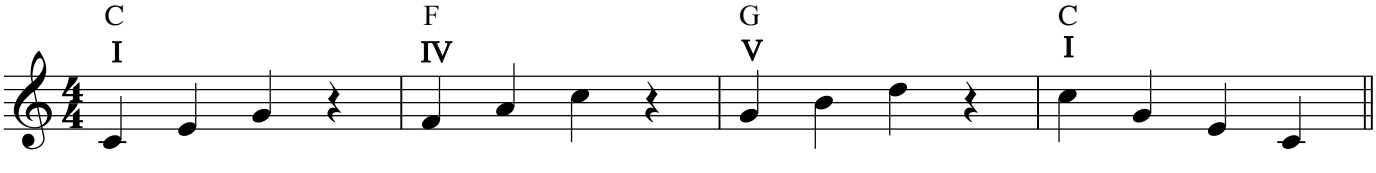
Line 6 is a pentatonic scale in that key.

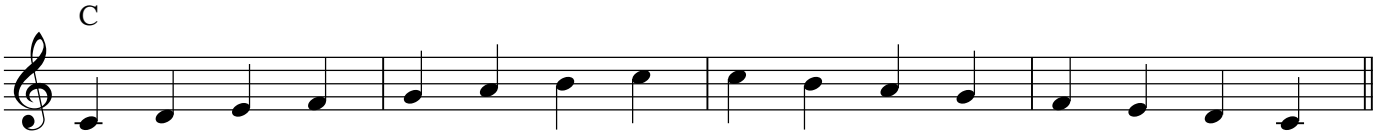
Line 7 shows the chord sequence built on the major scale of a given key, as we discussed on the previous page.

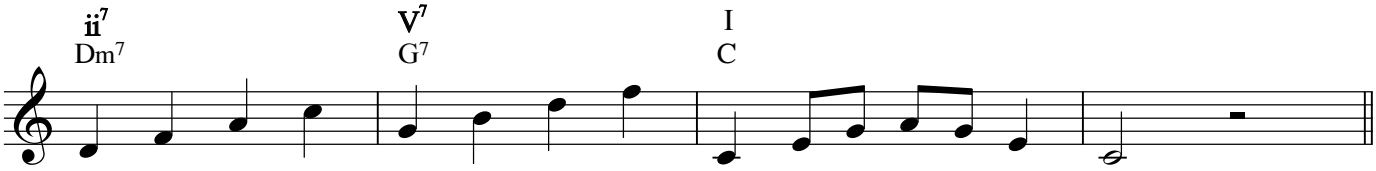
I can assure you that these are practical exercises, and you will have many immediate uses for the skills you gain from them. For example, when a dixieland march moves into Ab Concert, you will be able to cope. The same is true when *The St. Louis Blues* is called in the original key of G Concert.

Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of C

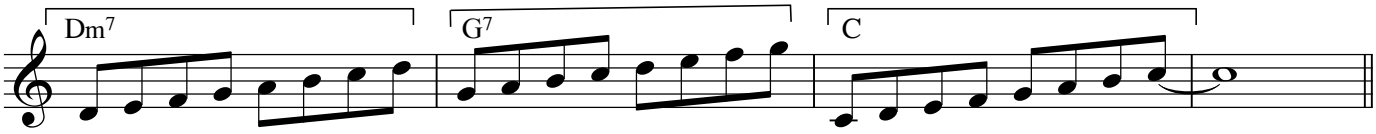
Concert B♭ for B♭ horns
Concert E♭ for E♭ horns



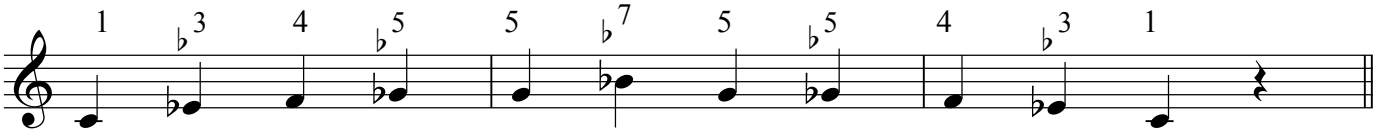




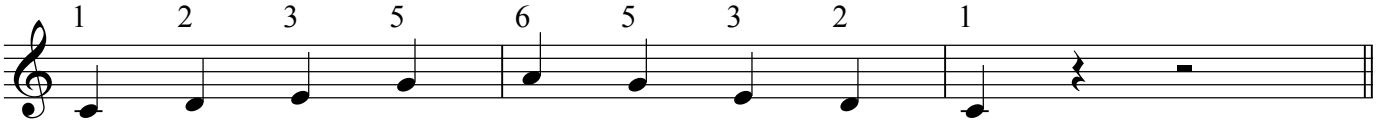
Dorian Mixolydian Ionian

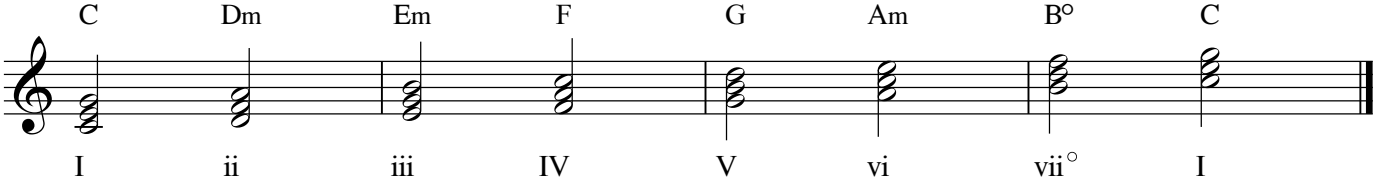


C Blues Scale



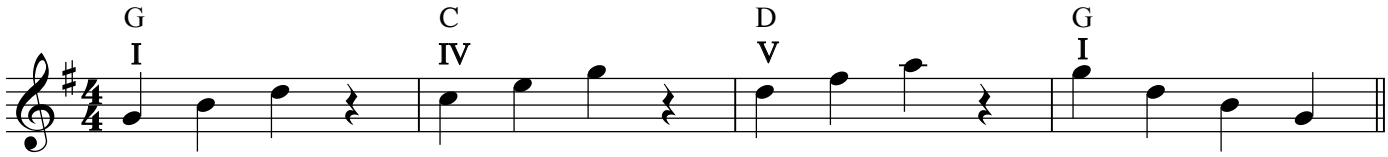
C Pentatonic Scale

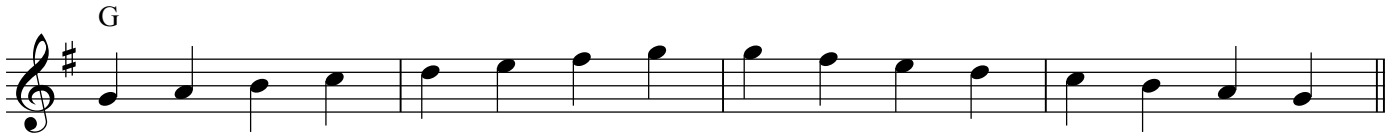


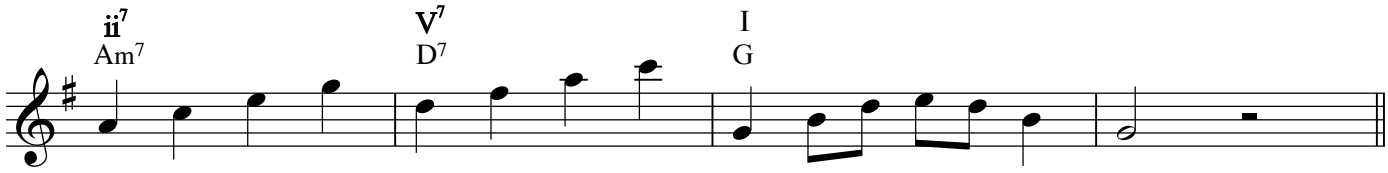


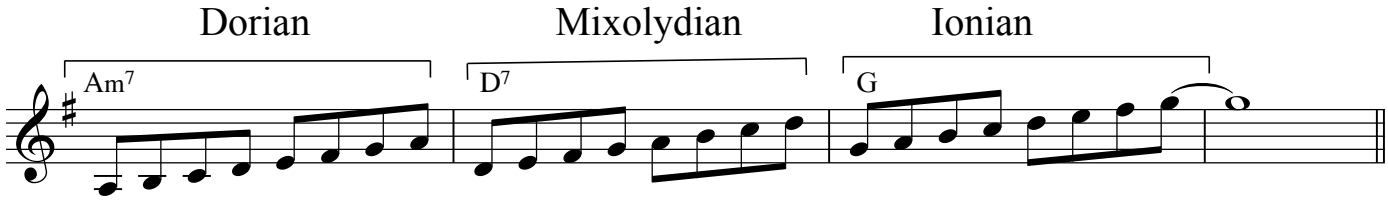
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of G

Concert F for B♭ horns
Concert B♭ for E♭ horns

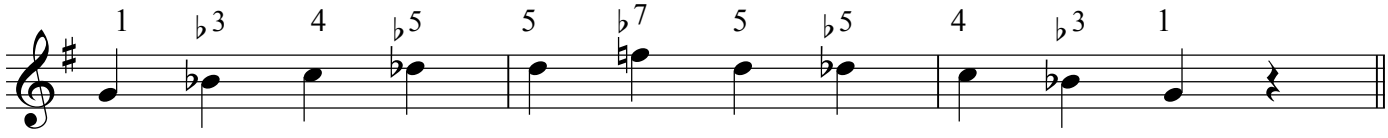




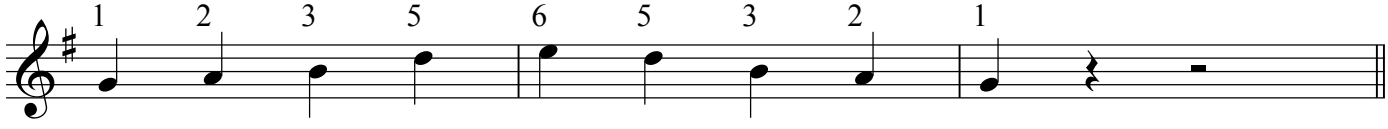


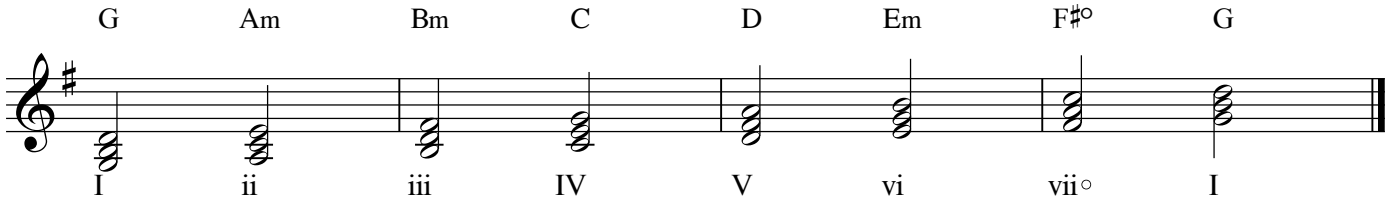


G Blues Scale



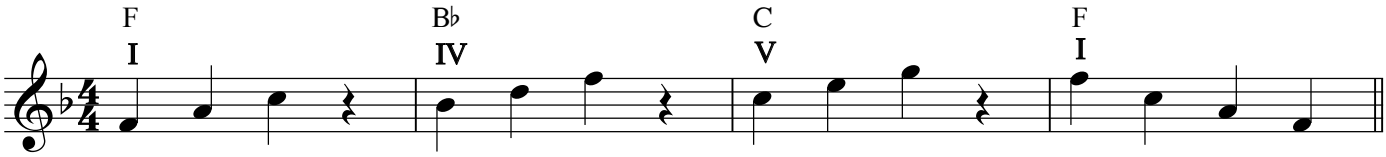
G Pentatonic Scale

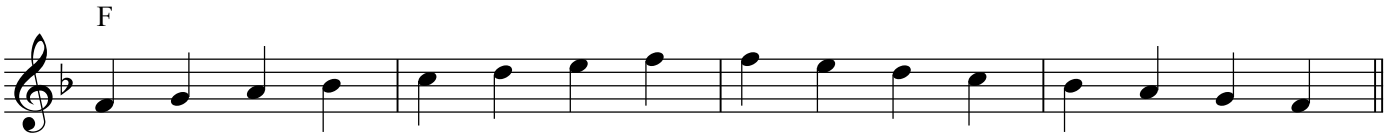


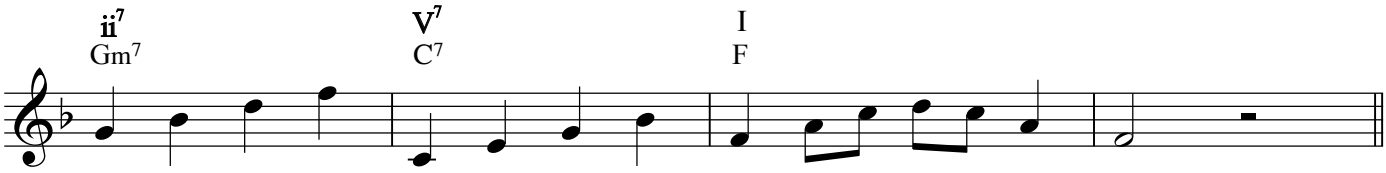


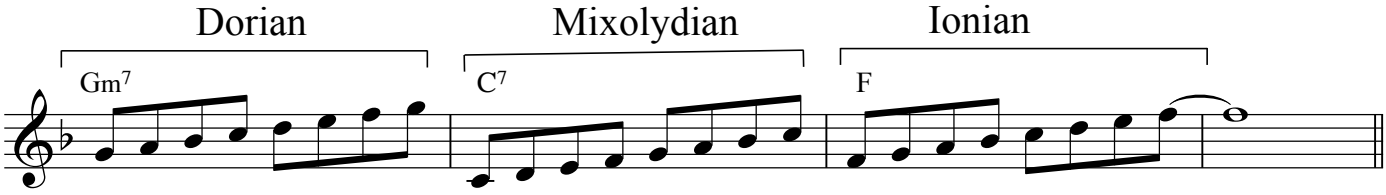
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of F

Concert E♭ for B♭ horns
Concert A♭ for E♭ horns

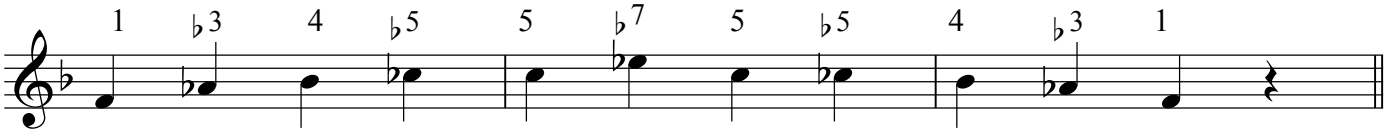




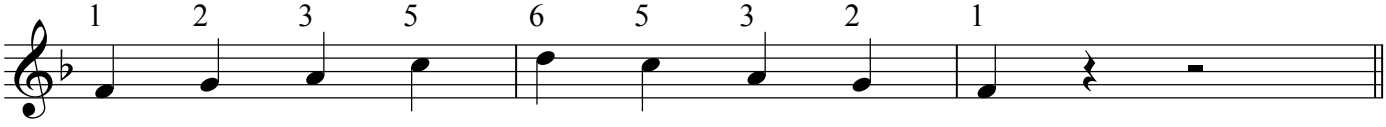


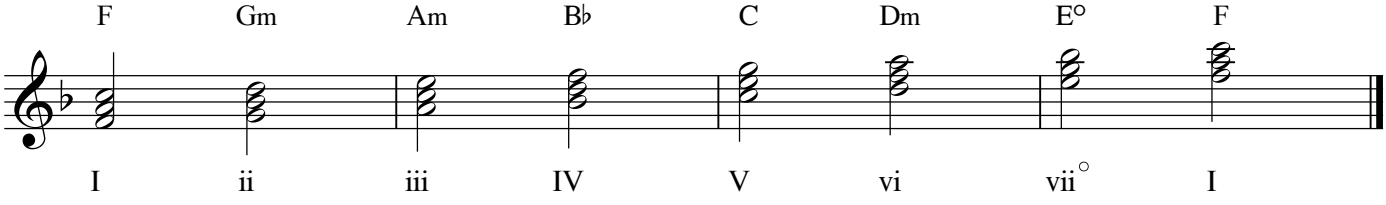


F Blues Scale



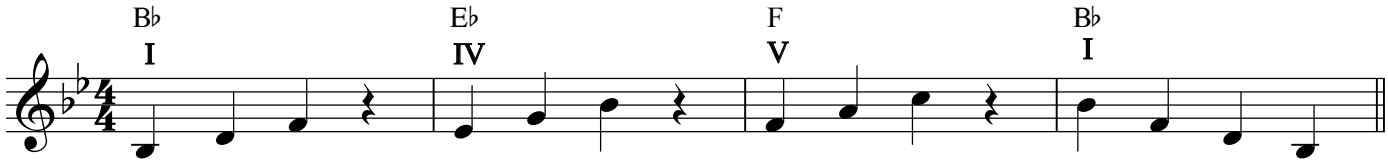
F Pentatonic Scale

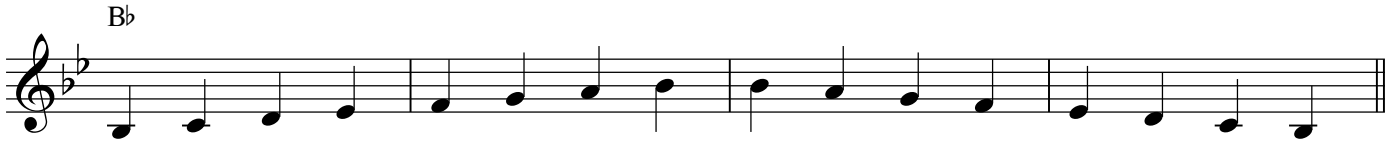


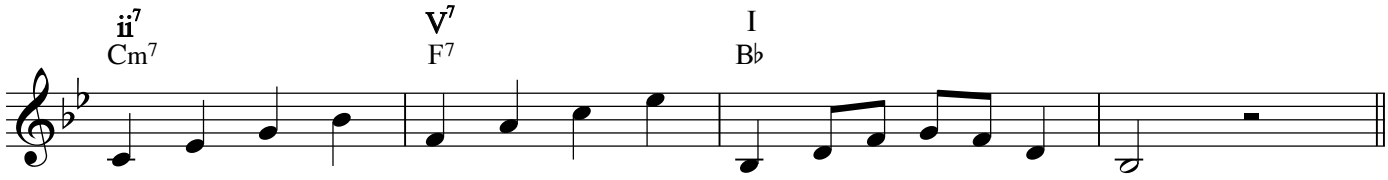


Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of B♭

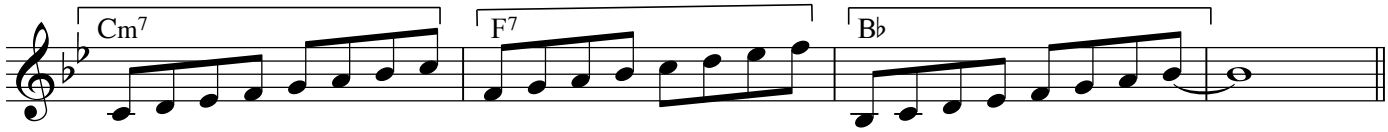
Concert A♭ for B♭ horns
Concert D♭ for E♭ horns



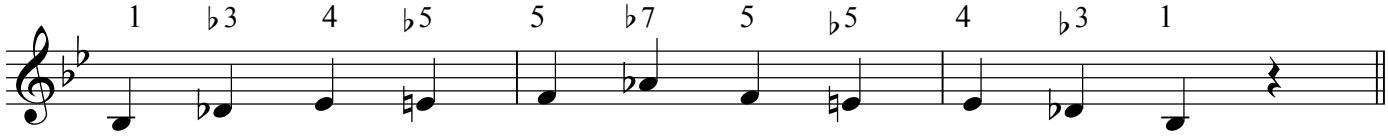




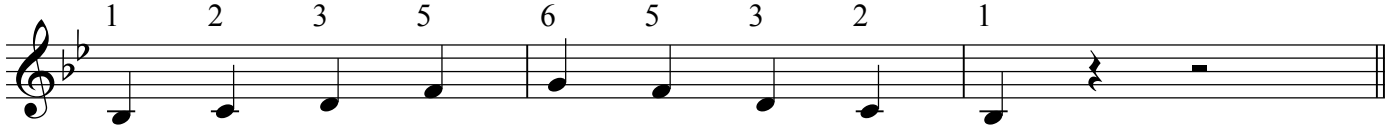
Dorian Mixolydian Ionian

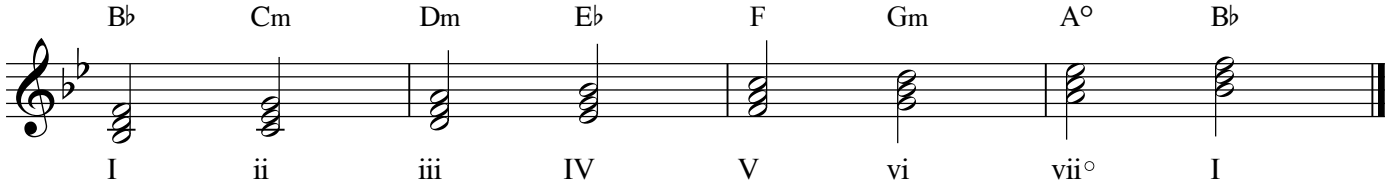


B♭ Blues Scale



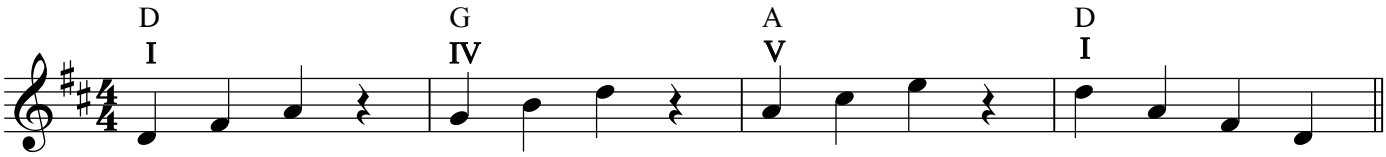
B♭ Pentatonic Scale

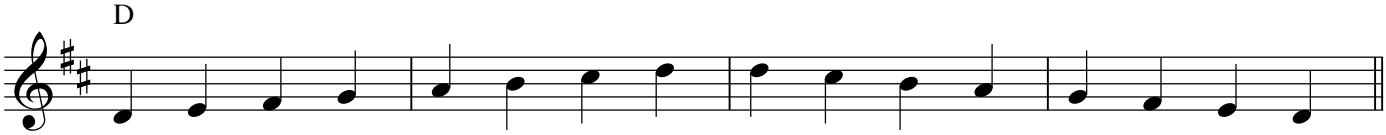


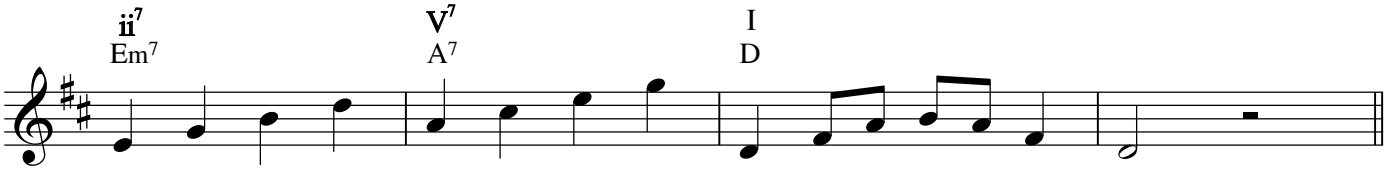


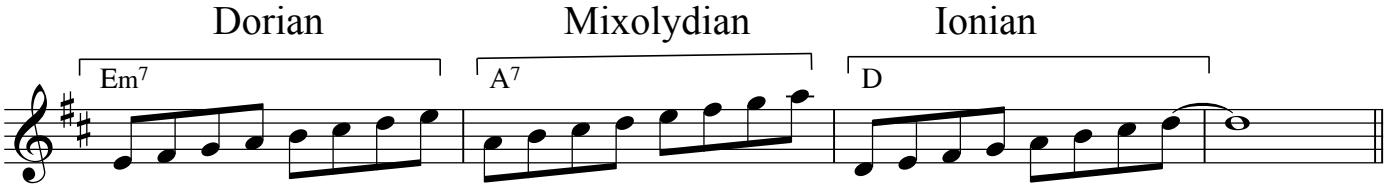
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of D

Concert C for B♭ horns
Concert F for E♭ horns

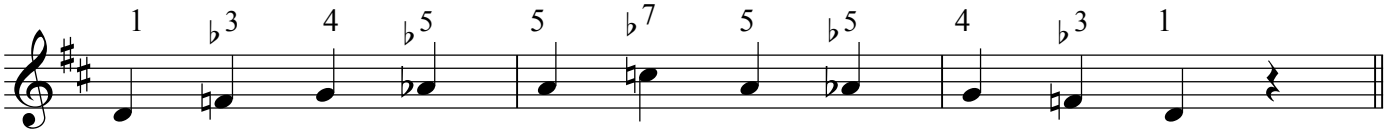




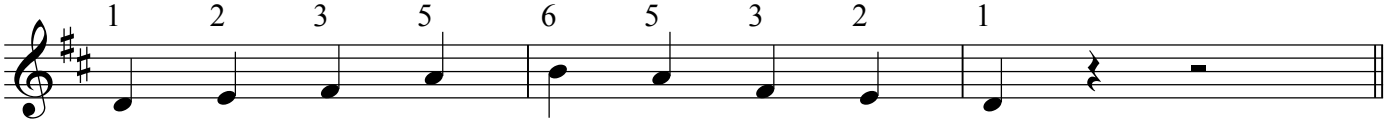


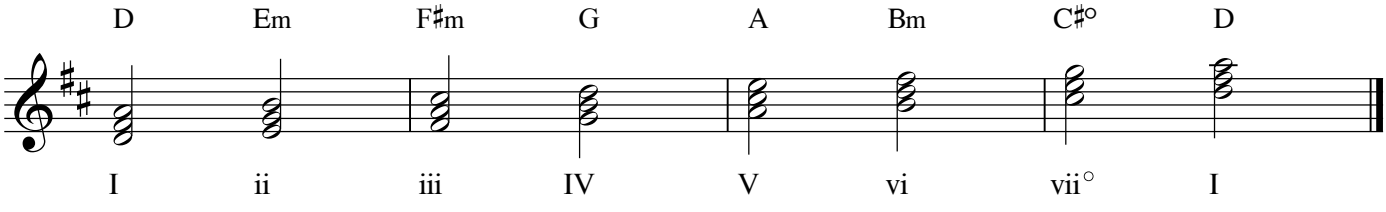


D Blues Scale



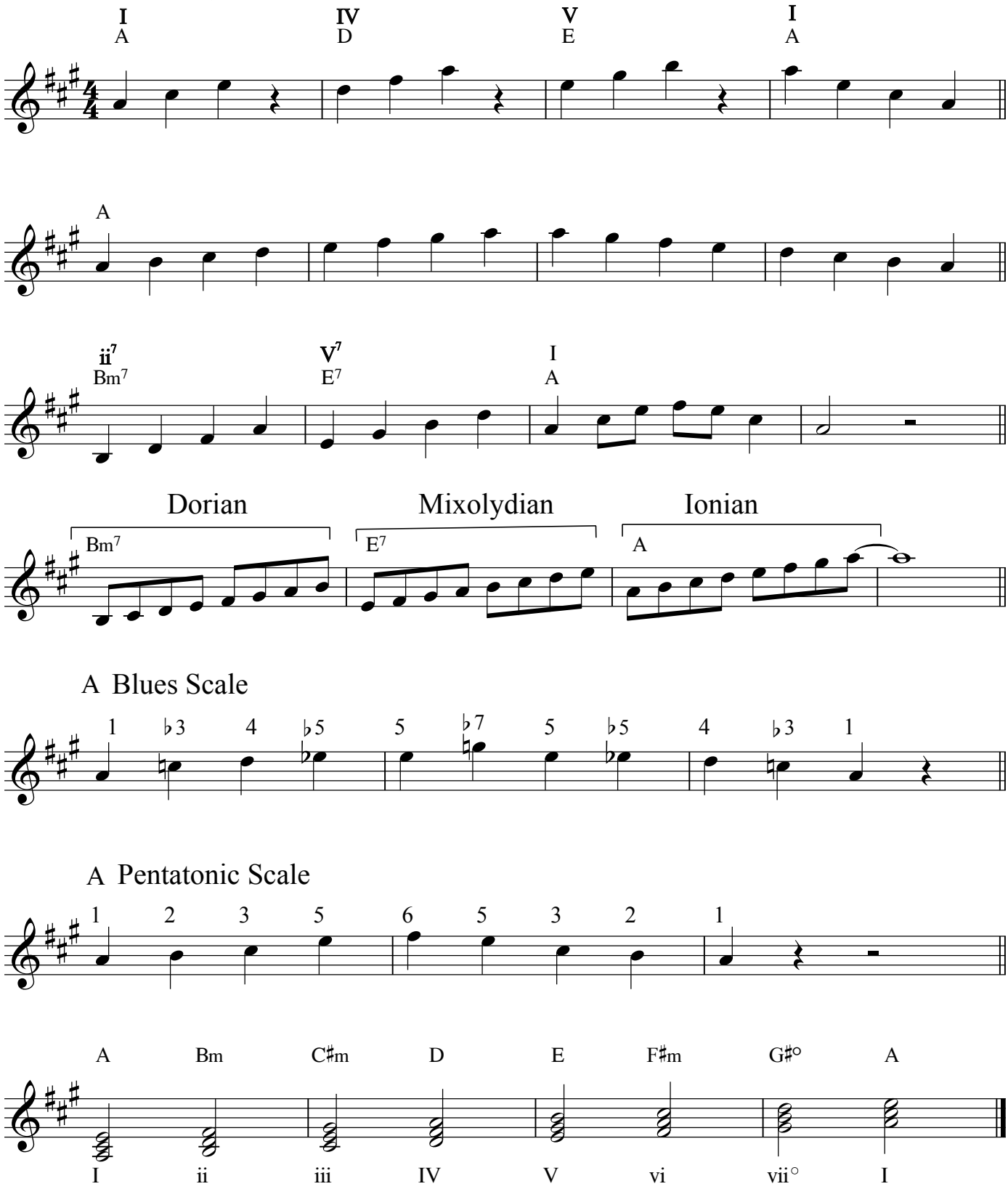
D Pentatonic Scale





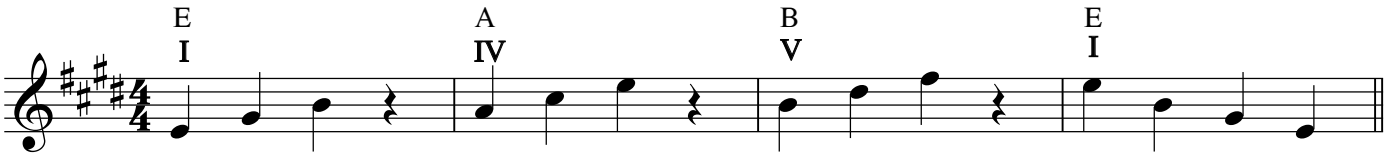
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of A

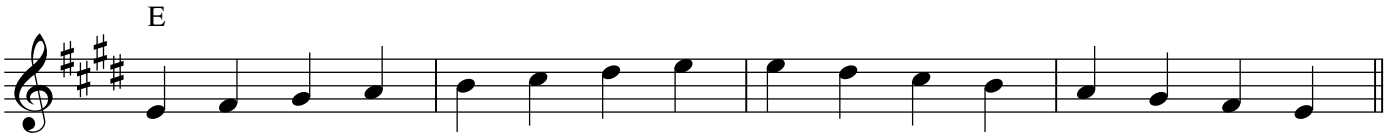
Concert G for B♭ horns
Concert C for E♭ horns

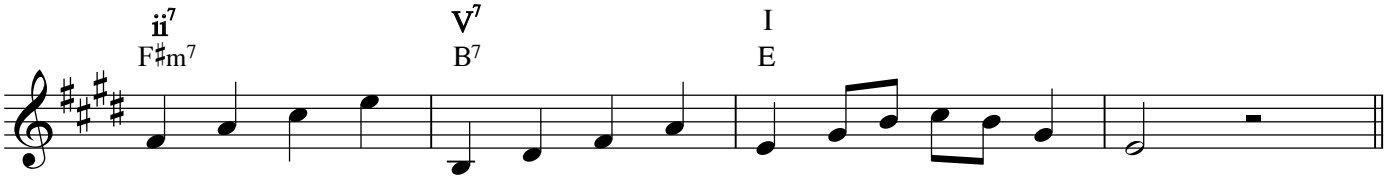


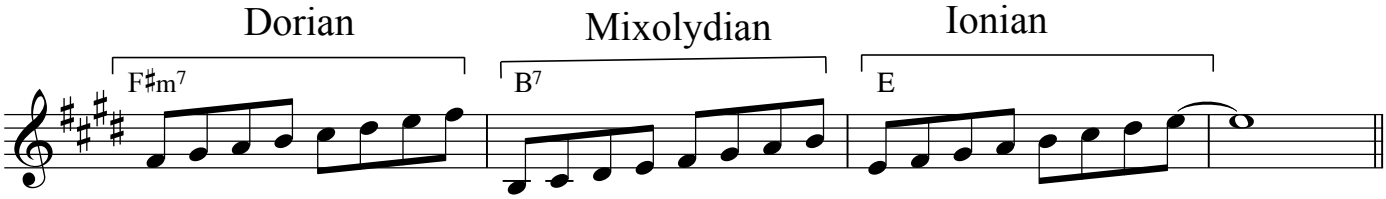
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of E

Concert D for B♭ horns
Concert G for E♭ horns

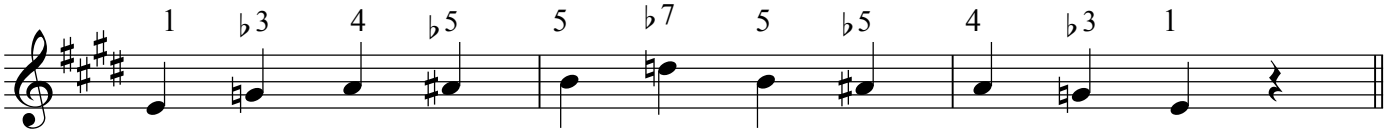




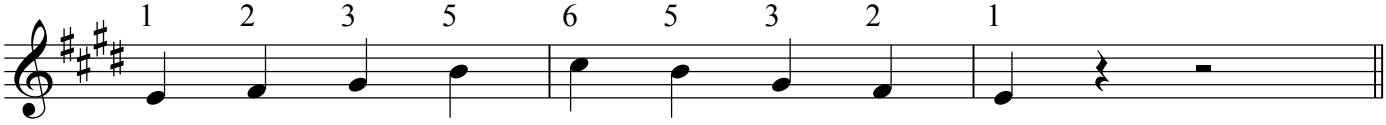


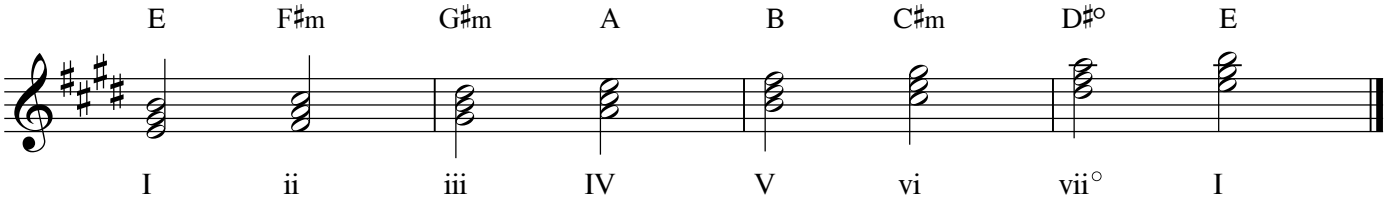


E Blues Scale



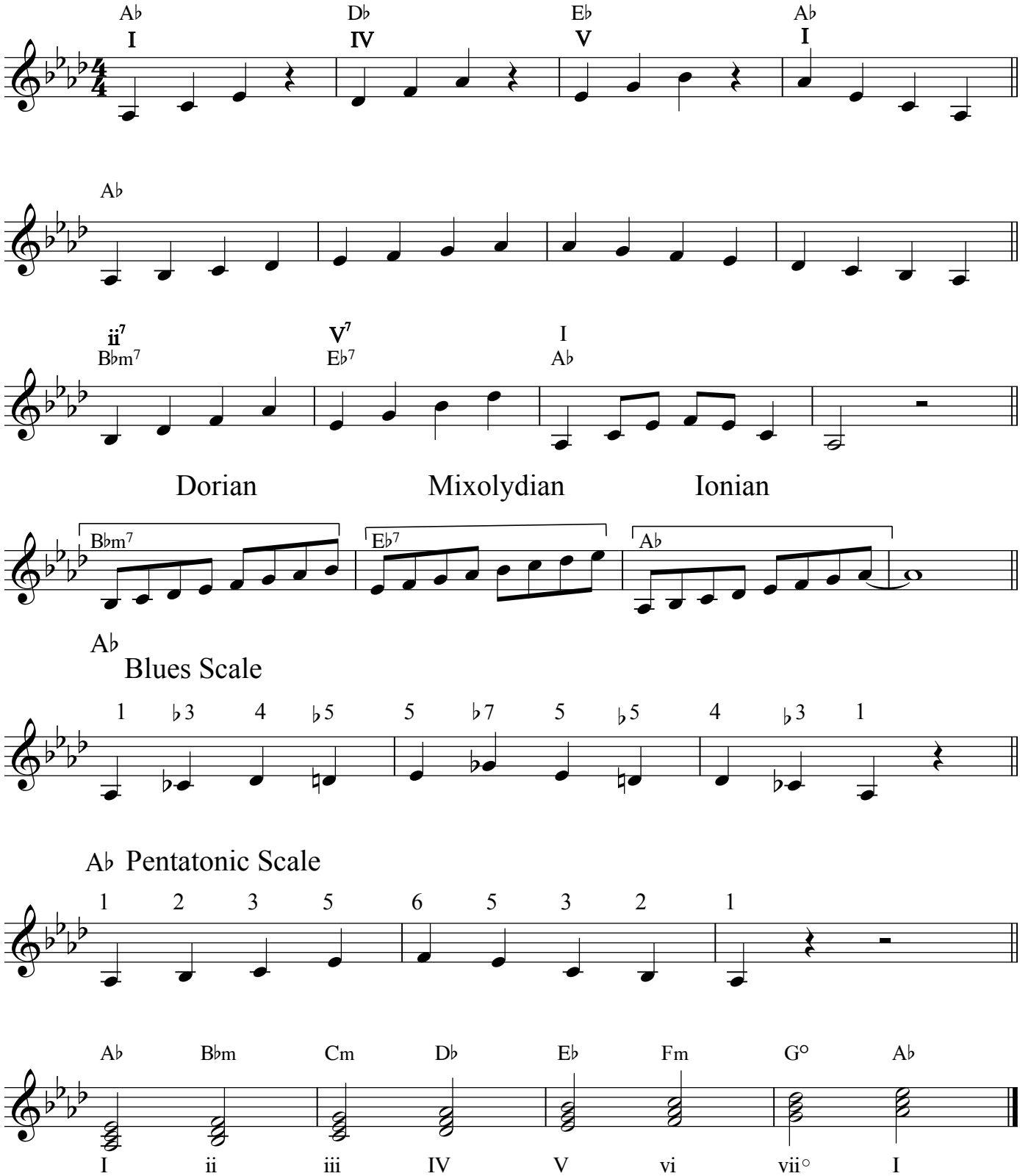
E Pentatonic Scale





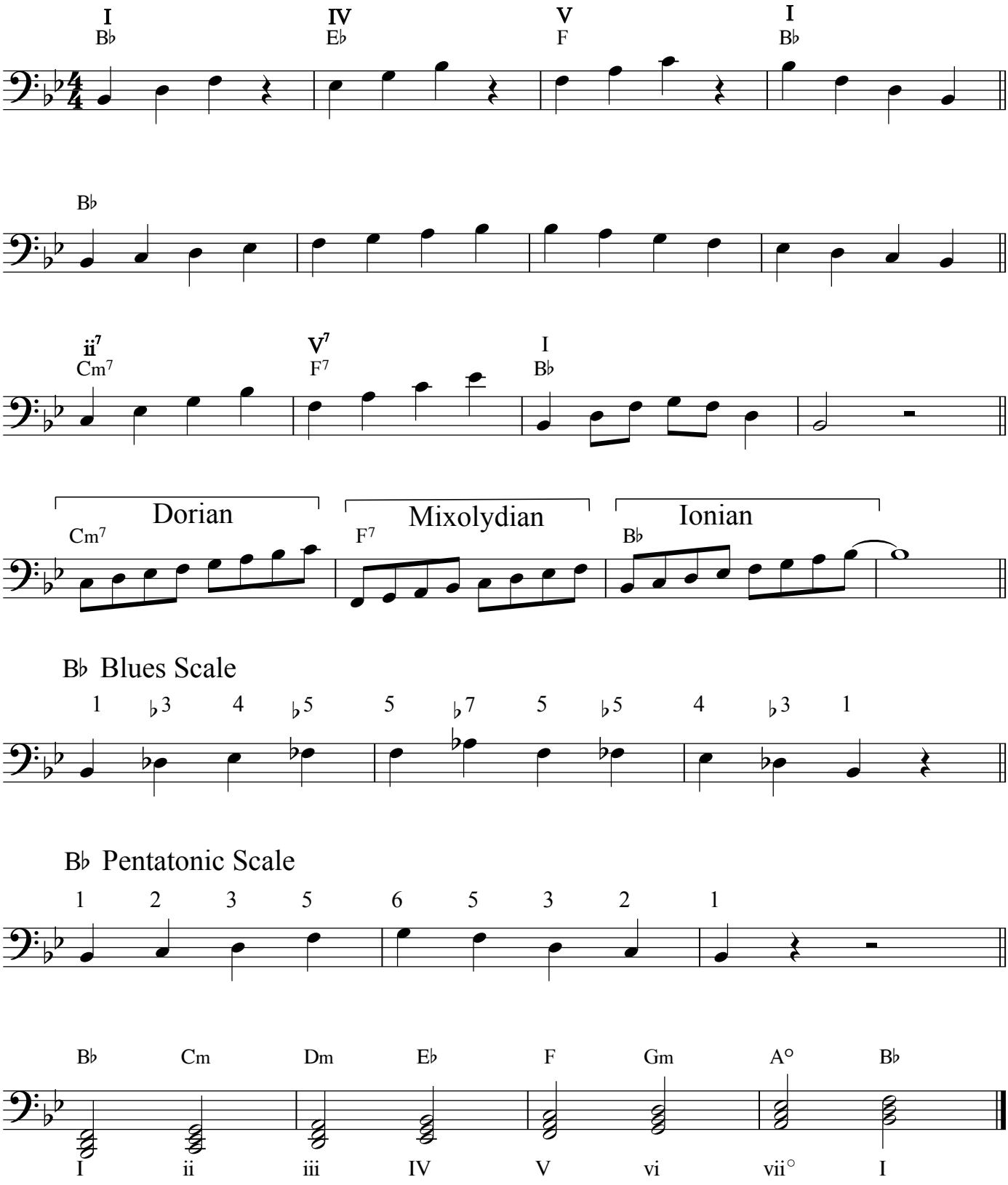
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of A♭

Concert G♭ for B♭ horns
Concert C♭ for E♭ horns



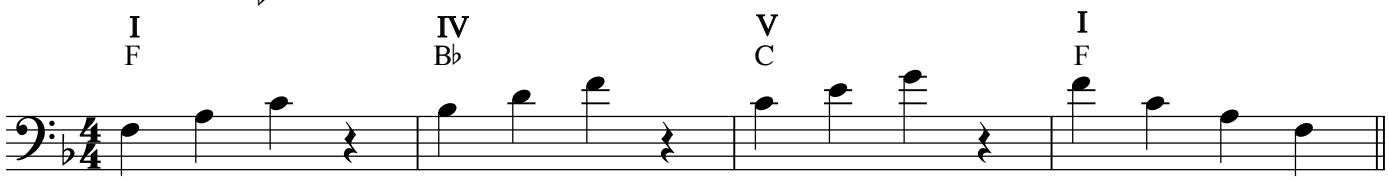
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of B♭

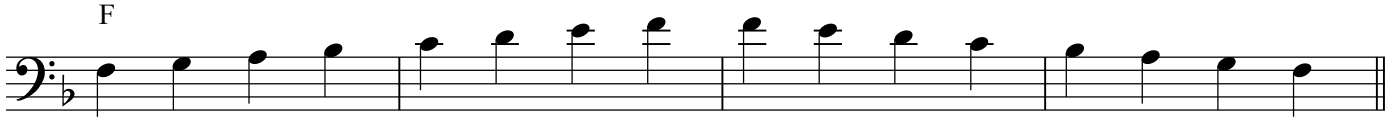
Concert A♭ for B♭ horns
Concert D♭ for E♭ horns

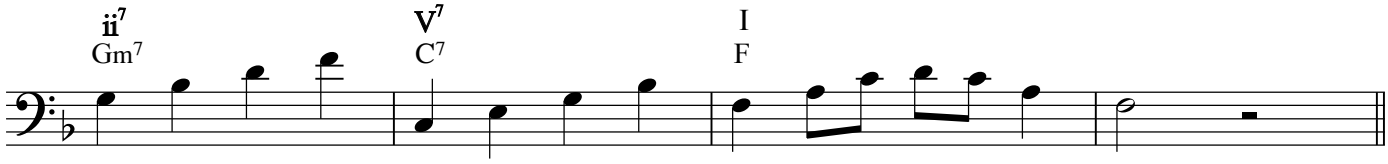


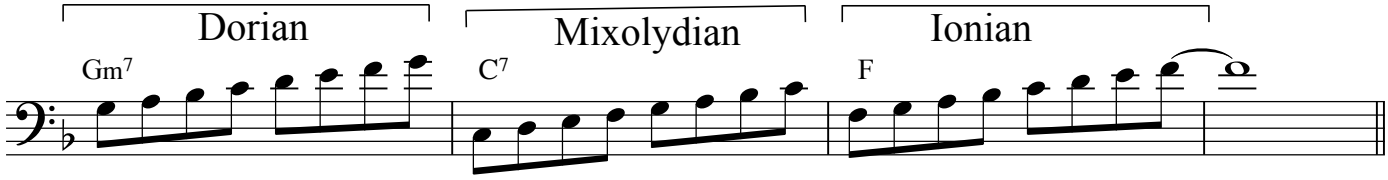
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of F

Concert E♭ for B♭ horns
Concert A♭ for E♭ horns

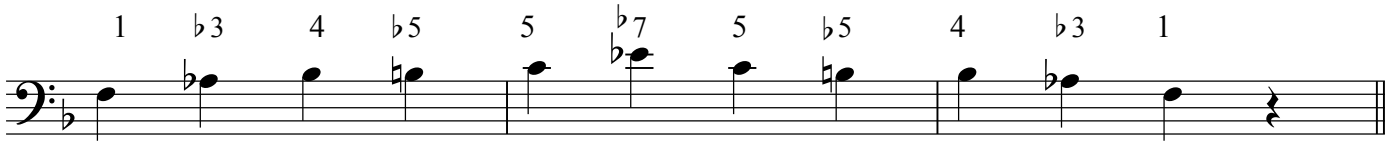




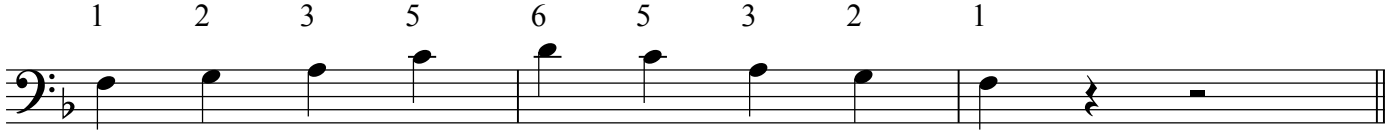


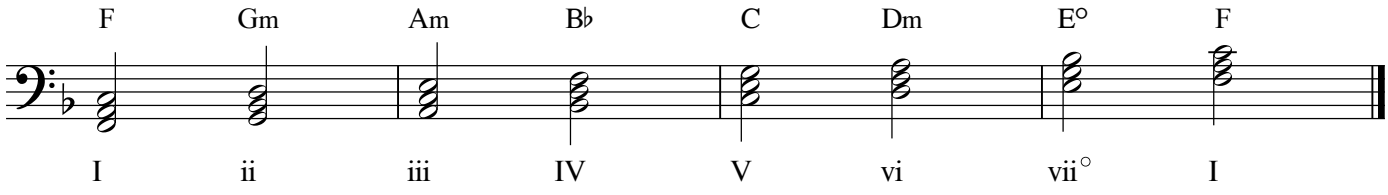


F Blues Scale



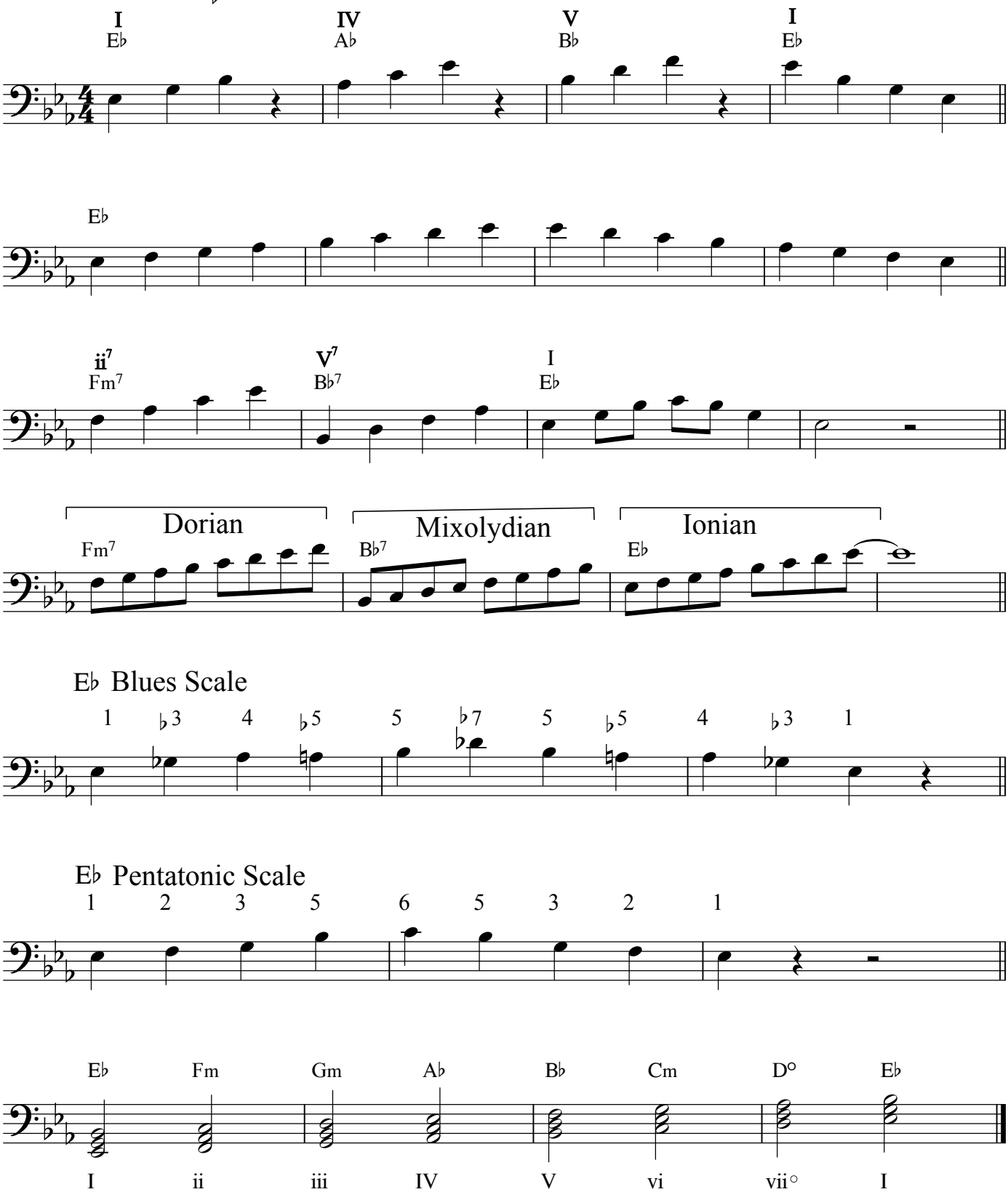
F Pentatonic Scale





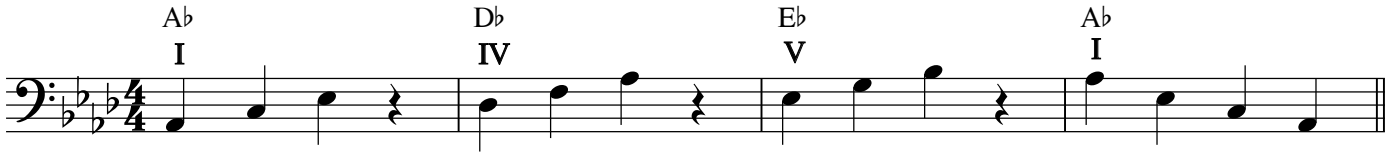
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of E♭

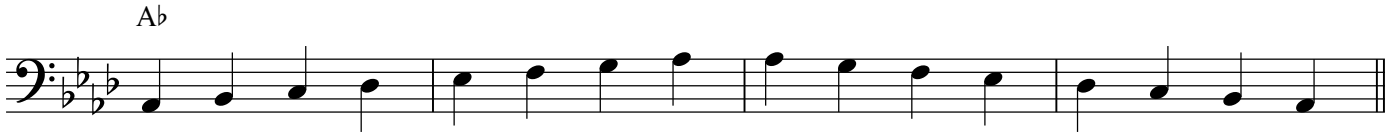
Concert D♭ for B♭ horns
Concert G♭ for E♭ horns

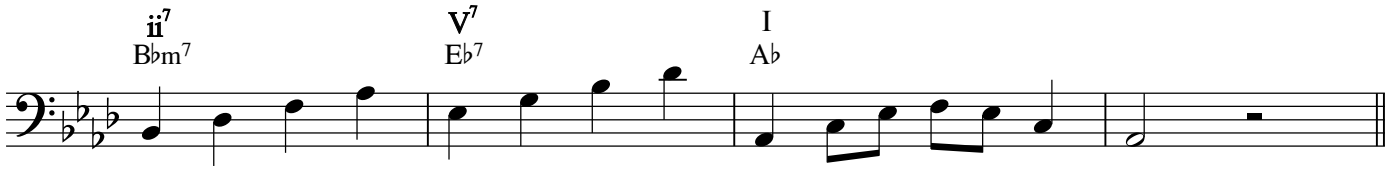


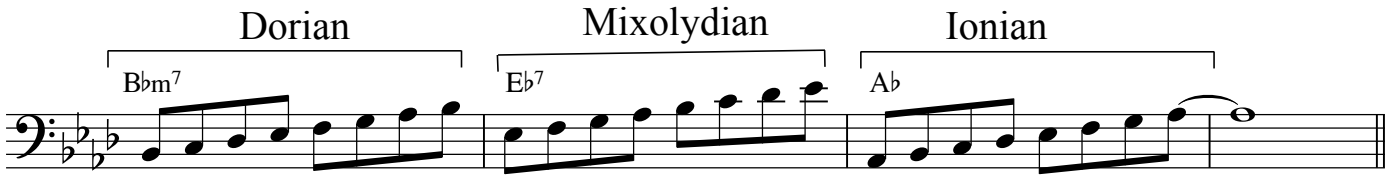
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of A♭

Concert G♭ for B♭ horns
Concert C♭ for E♭ horns

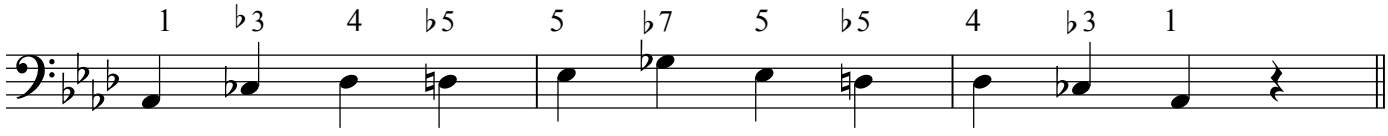




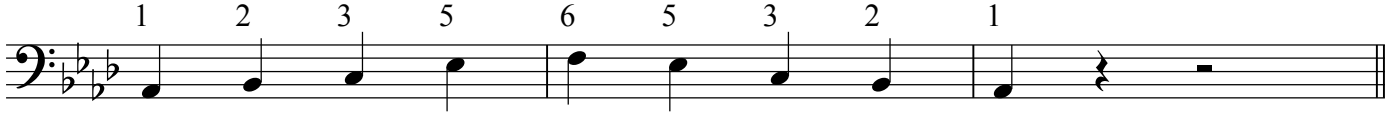


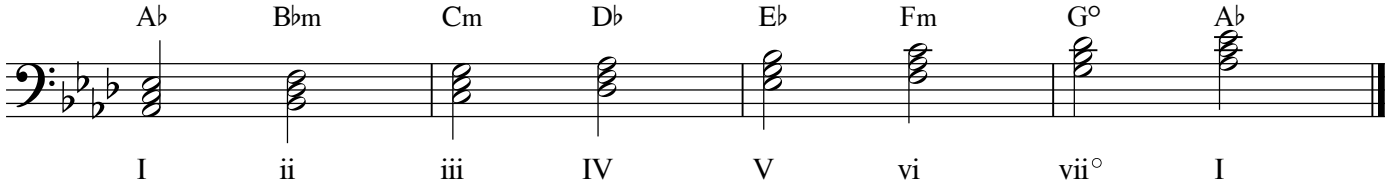


A♭ Blues Scale



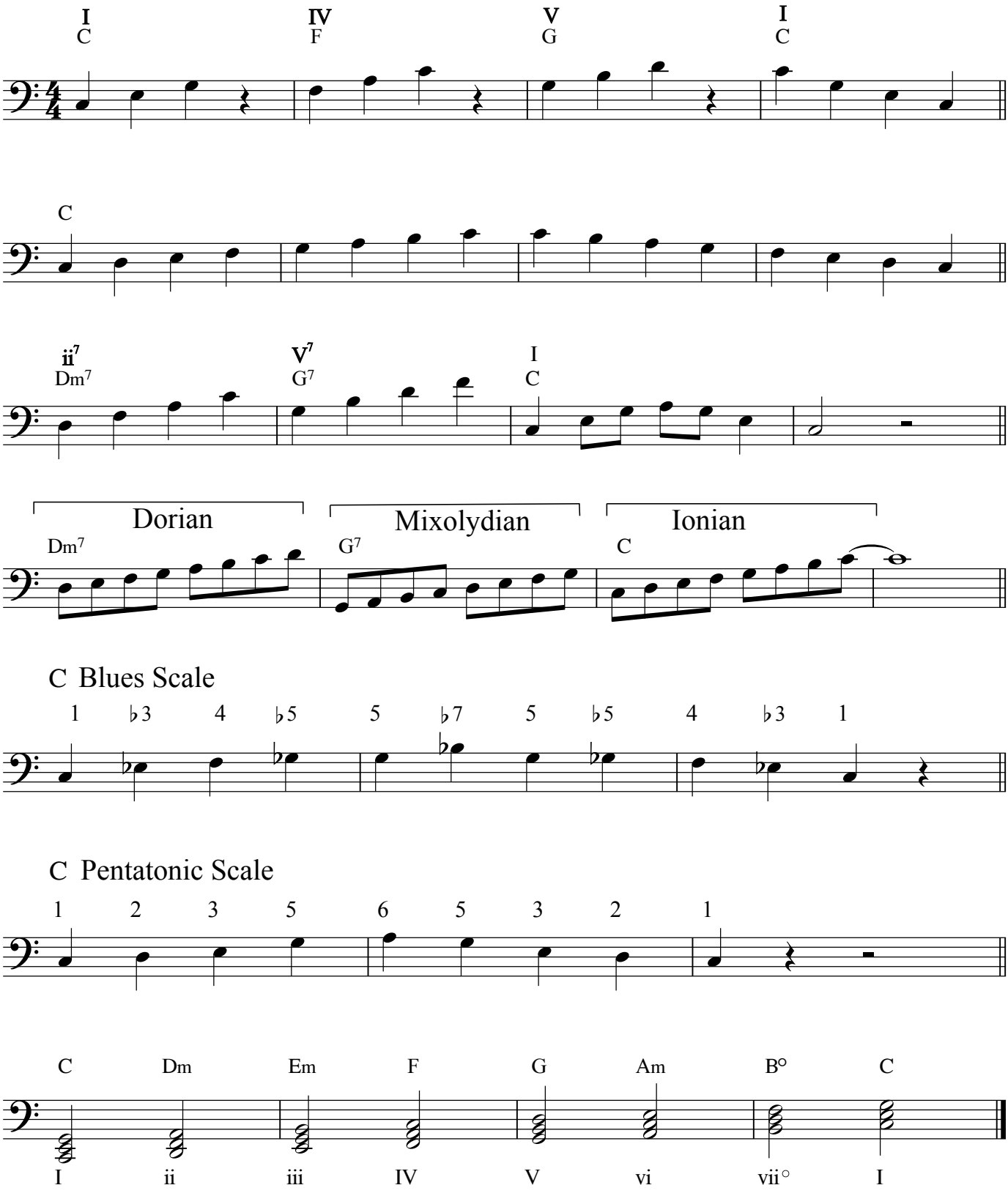
A♭ Pentatonic Scale





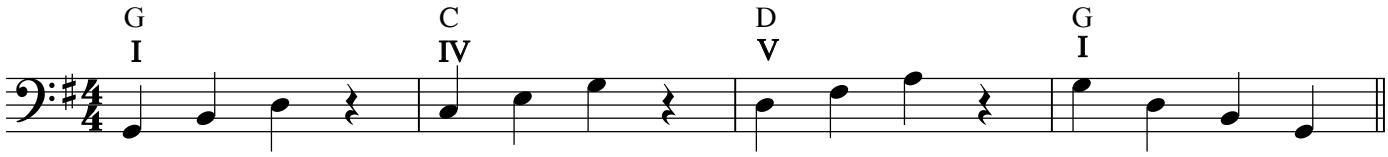
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of C

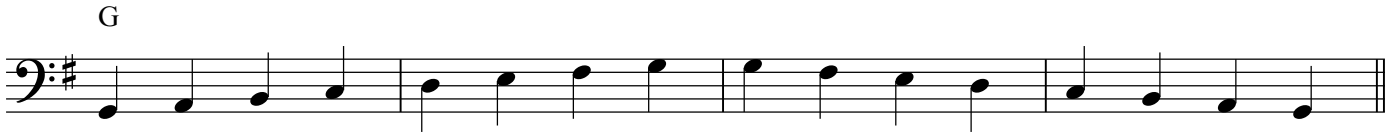
Concert B♭ for B♭ horns
Concert E♭ for E♭ horns

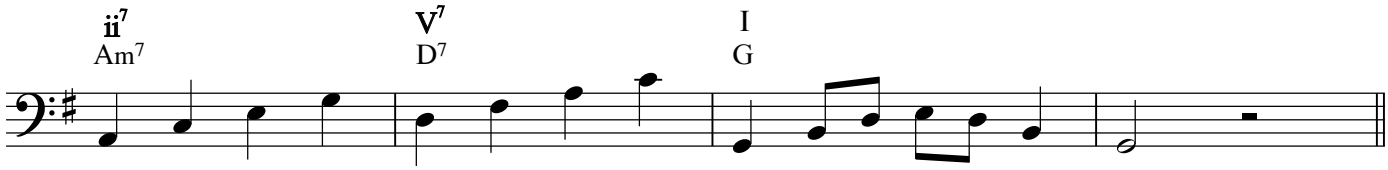


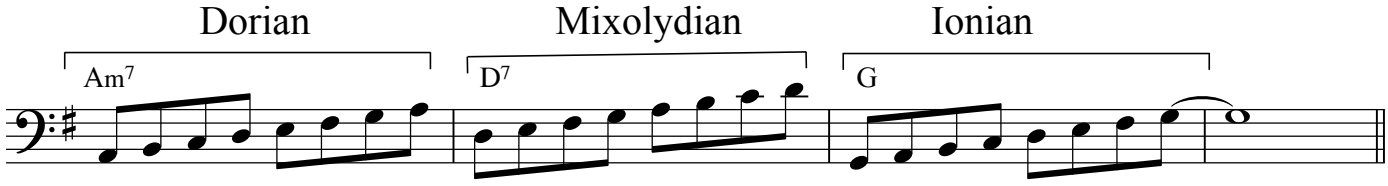
Chords Plus Daily Exercises - Key of G

Concert F for B♭ horns
Concert B♭ for E♭ horns

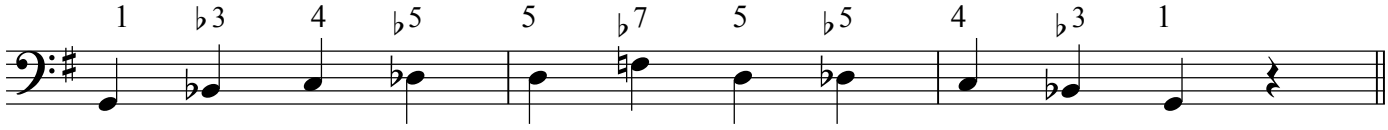




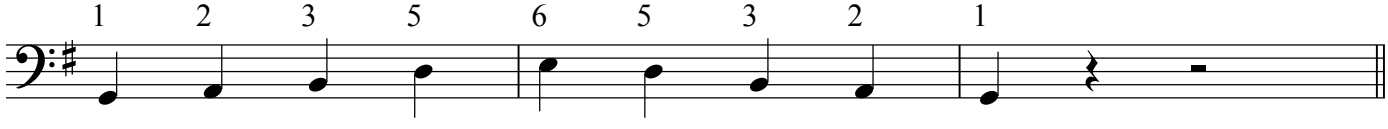


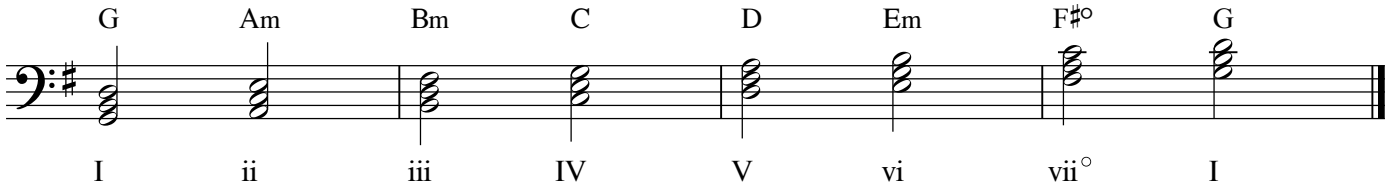


G Blues Scale



G Pentatonic Scale





CHAPTER 18

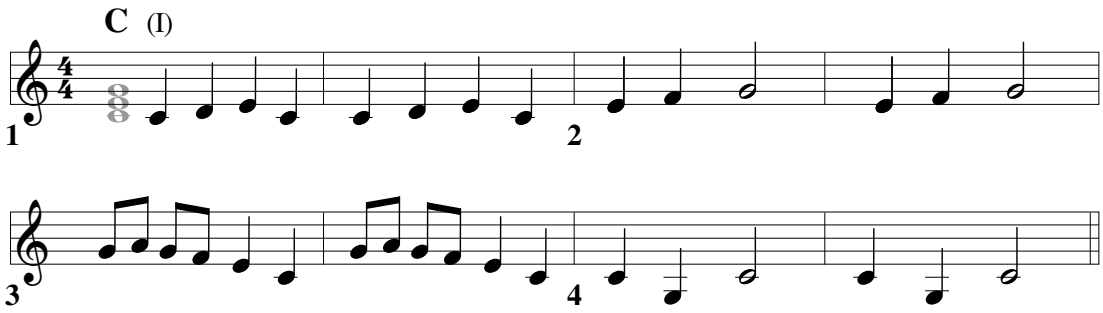
Chord progressions and songs

Now that we've discussed the basics of scales and chords, it is time to discuss the structure of popular songs and their chord progressions.

Early folk music. If we start with the earliest of European folk music, we find that the chord progressions were very simple because of limitations in instruments and musical technique. Also, because the music was handed down from generation to generation, there was probably an emphasis on keeping the traditional chords. Today, this is still true of Appalachian folk music and bluegrass.

One chord songs. If you were playing a bagpipe with drones pitched in the key of F, then all the melodies you played would have to fit within that key center. Likewise, there are plenty of early folk songs which stay in a single key. Here's a simple lead sheet for the French folk song known as *Frère Jacques*, or *Brother John*.

Brother John (One chord round)



You'll notice that all the notes of the melody fit in the C major scale, and most of the melody notes are also part of the C major chord, spelled C•E•G, ghosted in light gray.

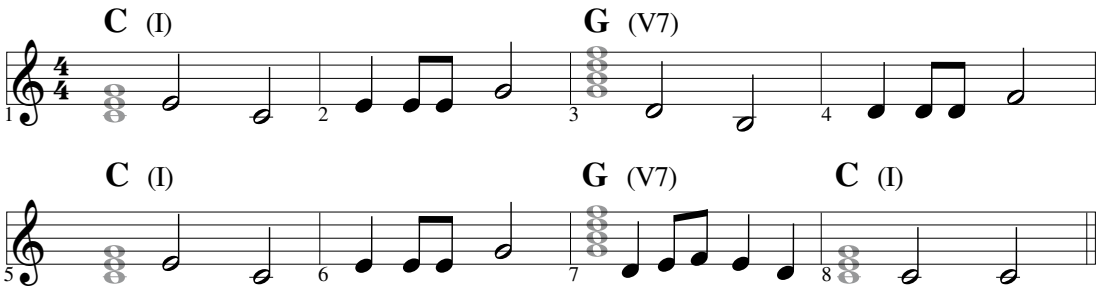
Because this song is designed to be sung or played as a *round* in four parts, the melody line is simple, the I chord (C major in this case) can be strummed easily by beginners, and all the musical interest comes from the staggered performance of the four sections. More on this in the next chapter.

In modern times, we may also encounter one chord songs in rock music, rap music, and even *modal jazz*. In these cases the musical interest comes from bass rhythm "grooves," catchy lyrics, or in the case of modal jazz, playing many variations on the scale of the key center mode.

Two chord songs. As you will recall from our previous chapters on Pythagorus and building chords, after the *tonic* or I chord, the second strongest chord in a song is the V, also called the *dominant*.

Most North Americans immediately recognize our common Scots/Irish/English childhood folk songs with the I-V chord. There are many variations of the I-V-I progression in country music as well. In the example below, *Skip To My Lou*, the dominant seventh has been added to the V chord to add musical interest.

Skip To My Lou (Two chord folk song)



Get out your instrument and play along. You can arpeggiate the two chords ghosted in gray notes, and experiment with playing them in various sequences and in various octaves. You should practice with a metronome until you can play along with chord arpeggios, and fill the measures with quarter notes, then eighth notes, and more varied patterns. This is a basic skill in jazz, called "playing over the chord changes." Your choice of notes may not be called a brilliant jazz solo yet, but if you are playing only chord notes in an interesting pattern, then you are on your way to making your own pleasing jazz statement.

Again, in simple folk songs, most of the melody notes fit within the chords. You also notice that in measures 3 and 7, the dominant seventh note (F) that has been added to the chord also functions as a melody note.

While this is a simple little tune, it was thoughtfully constructed. Sometimes the most effective early jazz starts with such basic material.

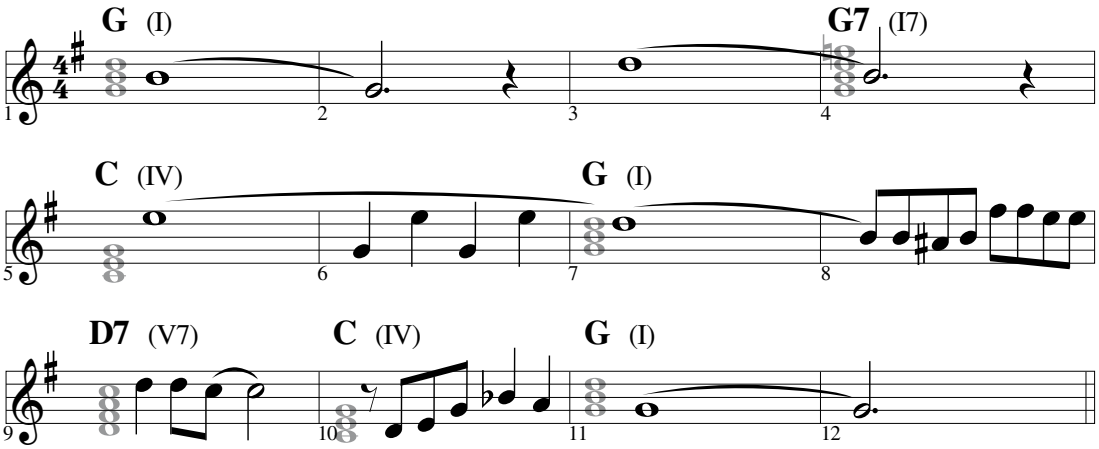
Three chord songs. The next strongest chord type in a song is the chord built on the fourth note of the scale, which we'll call the IV chord (also called the *subdominant* in music theory.) Three chord songs are everywhere around us, in folk music, early jazz, rock and roll, and importantly, the blues.

The blues have African roots, and were originally vocal music accompanied by a guitar. There are also blues in eight-bar and sixteen-bar versions, but the most common is called the *twelve bar blues* and is found in jazz, country, blues, and in later rock and roll. The basic blues chord progression is: I-I-I-I-IV-IV-I-I-V7-IV-I.

However, there are many possible variations on these changes. Here's the chorus sketch for an old New Orleans standard called *Canal Street Blues* which I've harmonized with standard blues chords.

Concert F
Transposed for
Bb Instruments

Canal Street Blues (Chorus, Three chord blues chords)



You will notice that in measure 4, a seventh has been added to the I chord, which adds richness and prepares the ears for the change to the IV chord. In fact, the seventh chord can be substituted for any chord in blues variations.

You'll also notice that the melody in measure 10 contains a Bb, which is a *blue note* that is really the dominant seventh of the IV chord. Again, the use of blue notes throughout the blues is a common part of their African origins.

If you are asked to play a solo on a twelve bar blues, the blues scale from the previous chapter (1, b3, 4, b5, 5, b7) that you have been practicing daily will come in handy, because the notes will sound right and "bluesy" when played with the chord of the same root name.

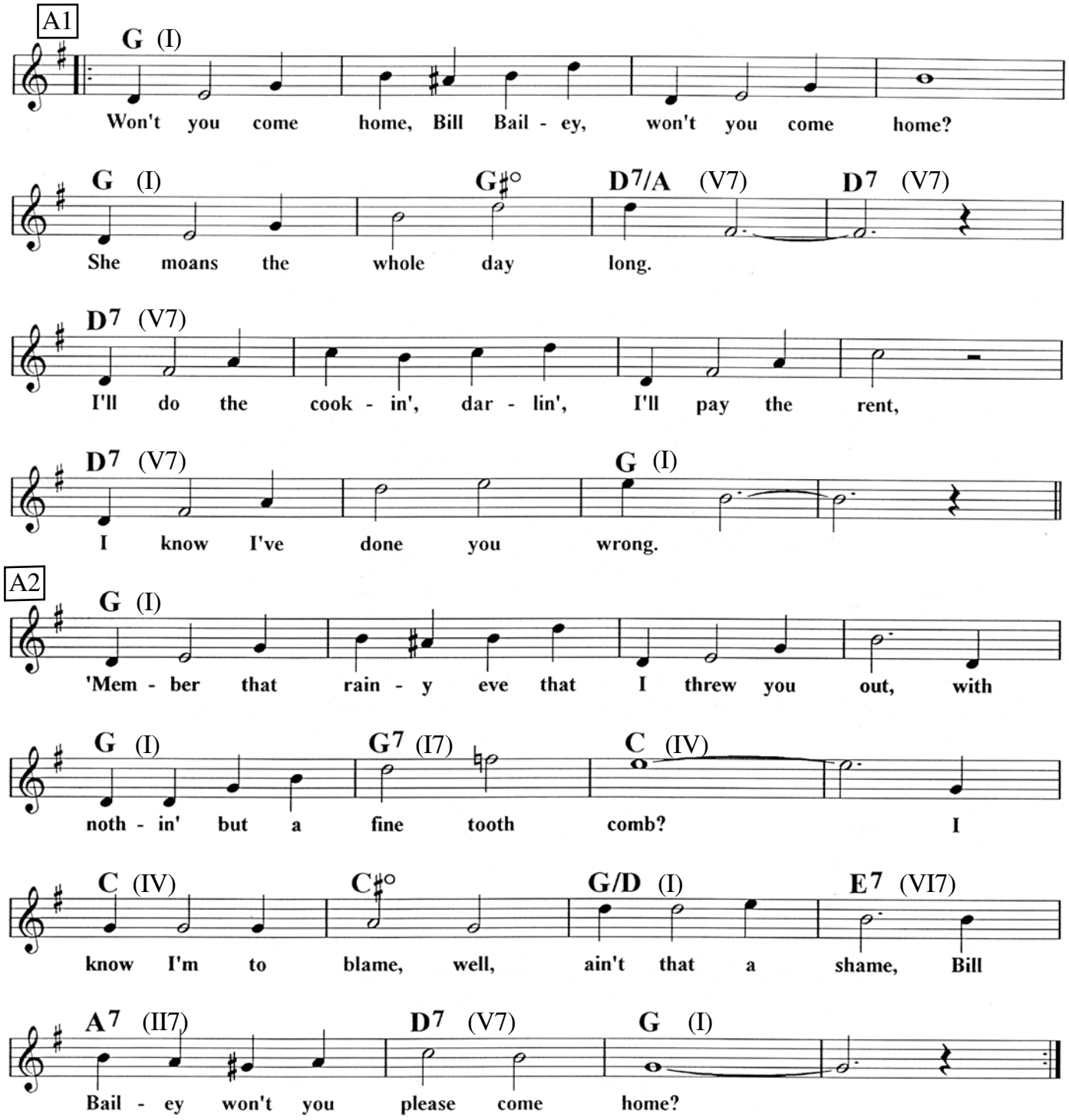
Thirty-two bar A-A songs. The next step up in complexity of dixieland songs are those based on popular songs which have two similar 16-bar sections, usually called A-A, or A1-A2 to indicate the slight variation of melody and chords in the second half.

Familiar songs of this type include *All of Me*, *Indiana*, *Hello Dolly*, and of course, *Bill Bailey*, the most well-know of all dixieland songs. Unlike the pop songs we will discuss next, these songs do not have a varied section in the middle, or *bridge*.

The basic chord changes to *Bill Bailey* have proven so popular that many other songs have borrowed them, including *Bourbon Street Parade*, *Tiger Rag* (chorus), *Just Because*, *Ciriciribin*, and *Around the World*.

Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home?

Concert F, Bb Horn Lead *Hughie Cannon, 1902*



Pencil in your own chord notes per the previous examples as an aid to learning all the chords in this song.

As you can see, the chord changes are slightly more interesting than our previous examples, and the most unusual chord comes at the climax of the song, the VI7 chord in measure 29. The sixth chord shows up in many pop songs.

In measures 6 and 26, I have not numbered the diminished chords. They are passing chords, and when you spell them

out you will see that the composer has simply raised the root note one-half step, so the major chord C•E•G becomes the diminished chord C#•E•G. This transition is also common in early jazz. If you know the major chord, then don't be stunned when you see it followed by a sharp diminished version— just raise the root a half step, and you are in business.

In the early 1900s, the thirty-two-bar A1-A2 popular song chorus format was the most common, often with a verse.

There were also a number of multi-strain compositions with ragtime influences. Jelly Roll Morton persisted in writing the more complex compositions in the older style throughout most of his career.

Thirty-two bar AABA songs. In the middle 1920s, the popular song began to change to the A-A-B-A popular song format. These are the songs that we think of as "standards" from Broadway musicals and movies of the 20s, 30s, and 40s. Most of these songs are still covered by copyright, and are readily available in commercial anthologies, so they are not included here.

These songs usually feature an eight-bar theme (A1) which is repeated exactly or with slight variation (A2), followed by an eight-bar *bridge* or *release* (B), usually in a different tonal center, followed by the final eight-bar section (A3).

Chicago-style dixieland bands particularly play dozens of these pop tunes, such as *Oh, Lady Be Good, Blue Skies, Oh, Baby, Ain't Misbehavin', Love Is Just Around the Corner,* and *I'm Beginning To See The Light*, and on and on.

Not only did the song form change, but chord progressions became more varied. The reason should be obvious: there were thousands of popular songs being written in the section of New York City called Tin Pan Alley, and they could not all sound the same— like *Bill Bailey*— they needed different melodies, different words, and different chordal colors.

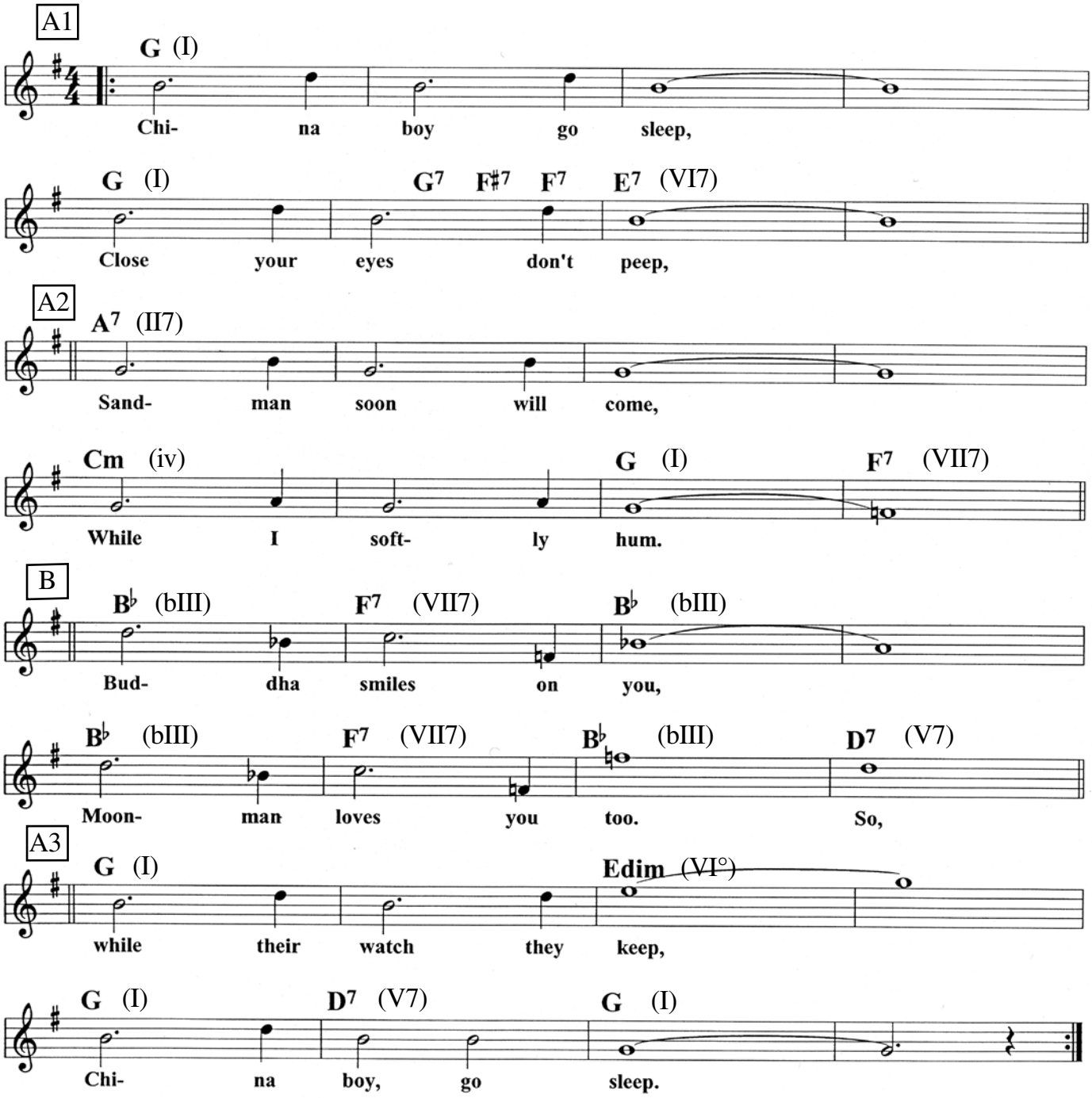
I have chosen one of the earliest and more interesting of the AABA tunes, (perhaps really an ABCA tune) that has become a dixieland standard, the chorus of *China Boy*, illustrated on the following page.

Immediately, you will notice that it uses more chords than simple dixieland songs, and in unexpected sequences. It does not follow the simple I-IV-V pattern, and the bridge [B] effectively modulates to the key of Bb. Part of this may be due to the desire to give an exotic "Chinese" feeling to the song, but the interesting chord changes to this popular song are probably why it was recorded by so many early jazz bands, and why it is still played today, in spite of its insipid lyrics.

China Boy

Concert F, Bb Horn Lead

Winifree/Bouteljen, 1922

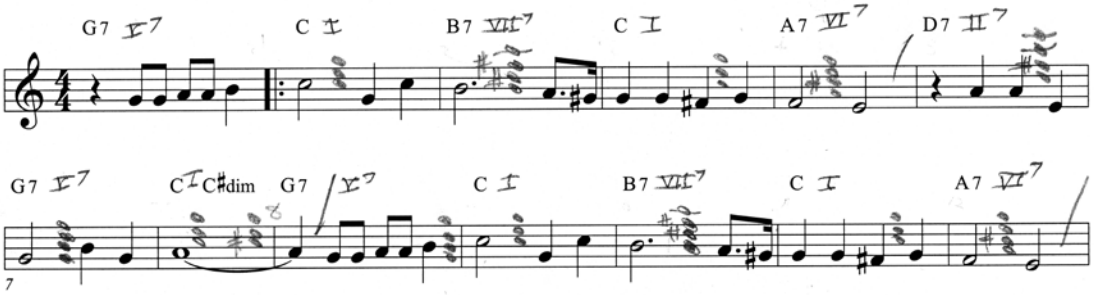


Pencil in your own chord notes per the previous examples as an aid to learning all the chords in this song.

Other song structures. Many early dixieland tunes are multi-part ragtime or march compositions. They may include introductions, several thematic strains, interludes, trios, and tag endings, often with key changes. You will need to analyze each individual part of the song as we have above. You may also find a few songs longer than thirty-two bars in the great American songbook, but those are rarely played in early jazz.

How to analyze and study a complex song. When I am asked to perform a song that is new to me, I first sit down with a soft pencil and write in the chords, similar to the light gray notes you found in the earlier examples in this chapter. That forces me to spell and learn every chord in the song if I don't already know them.

Then I look carefully at the structure, and lightly indicate with pencil the roman numeral relationships of the chords. Here's a sample from one of my working band books. Yes, it is a little cluttered and messy, but the important thing is that it works for me. The long hash marks indicate the end of melody phrases.



Then I get out the clarinet and practice the song melody and go over the chord arpeggios. If I had a friendly pianist or complete rhythm section available, I would use them to practice the song's chord changes, just as Benny Goodman did in his heyday. But unfortunately, I do not have those friends around the house each day, so I do the next best thing.

Using Band In A Box. I use the computerized music program called Band In A Box (www.pgmusic.com) as an aid to learning new songs, practicing chord arpeggios, creating clarinet harmony lines, and developing clarinet solos. It is also useful for transposing lead sheets for various instruments and vocal keys.

Band In A Box may not have the flexible human feel of a live jazz rhythm section, but it still one of the best learning tools available.

I personally recommend that you use a simple jazz style and turn off some of the advanced chord substitution features until you have learned the material well.

CHAPTER 19

Creating extemporaneous harmony lines.

In the prevous chapters you have begun to learn your instrument's scales, chords, and how to analyze the structure of a popular song. Now we come to the first reason for all this work: so you can begin to create harmony lines.

Of course, if you are playing in a reading band in which all your harmony parts are written out by an arranger, then this chapter holds limited interest for you.

More likely, if you are playing in a dixieland band which works from simple lead sheets and *head arrangements* (so called because you make them up and keep them in your head), then this chapter is critically important to you.

As you can hear by listening to dixieland recordings, there are many personal approaches to playing jazz harmonies, and in skilled hands it is a high art rather than an exact science. In the classic dixieland band front line of cornet, clarinet and trombone, the clarinet is the most important voice in creating the the overall "sound" of the band, and outlining the harmonic structure of each song.

This is partly true because the clarinet part in the high *clarino* register stands out more than the trombone. If the clarinet plays a bad note (*clam* or *clinker*) the audience will hear it. The trombone blends better, and experienced players are good at "slipping and sliding" off a bad note quickly.

Types of dixieland harmony. There are two basic approaches to harmonizing in dixieland.

The first is called *polyphony*, (from the Greek "many tones"). It is familiar to us in folk song rounds and the remarkable fugues of J.S. Bach. Each voice, or instrument, is playing a different rhythmic phrase. When they are overlaid, the result is a complex pattern of harmonies.

The second is called *homophony*, (from the Greek, "same tone") or hymn style, which is familiar to most of us in the vocal harmonies used in church hymns. The harmony parts move over a very similar rhythmic structure, creating chords.

Harmony note assignments. As a terribly broad generalization, when playing ensemble passages, most dixieland bands assign the melody note to the cornet, a harmony that is a third away from to the melody to the clarinet, and the trombone is normally assigned a harmony based on the fifth of the melody. I know the beginning horn players are hoping that this is a pat formula, but it is not. We must learn to play what "sounds right" to the individual and to the group. Most important, we must learn to stay off other player's notes.

This means first and foremost when playing dixieland ensemble passages, *the clarinet and trombone should never double the melody at any point*. No, no, no! Leave the melody to the cornet or other assigned lead player.

If the trombonist is adept at playing the "tailgate" New Orleans style, he will normally be playing notes that do not conflict with the clarinet.

As you can hear from listening to dixieland recordings, and from examples in this chapter, sometimes the clarinet plays a harmony that is a third *above* the cornet, and sometimes a harmony that is a third *below* the cornet works better.

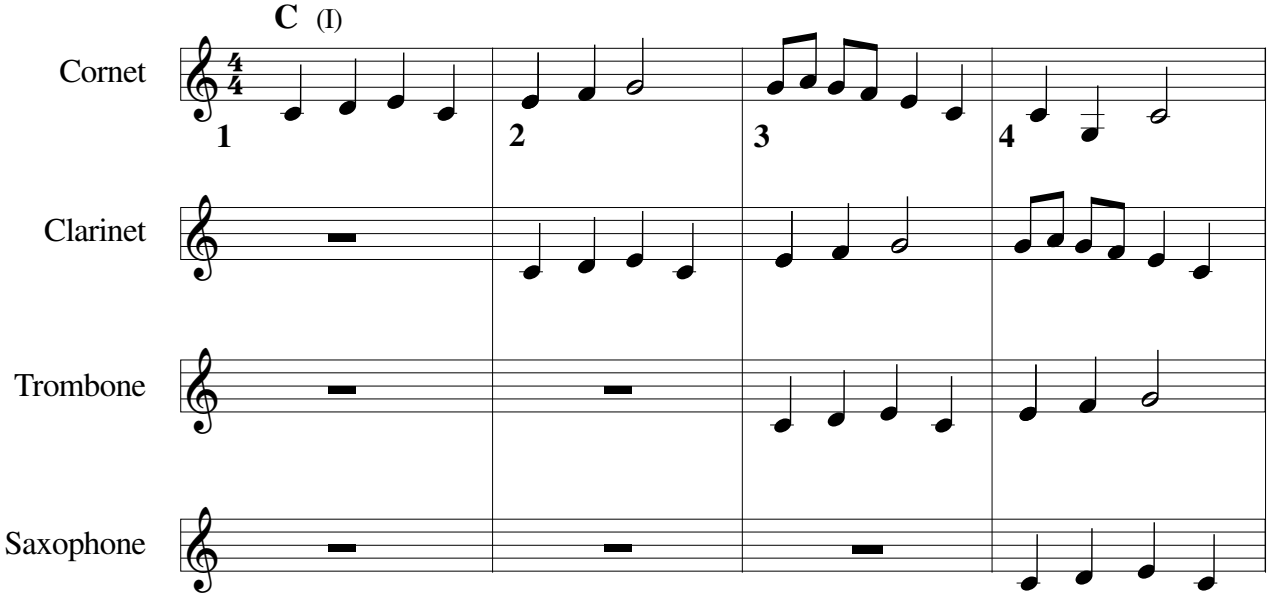
Also, as explained in Michael Miller's book on Music Theory, sometimes the relationship between the melodic line and the underlying chord causes a clash, and the clarinet must move to a harmony note that fits better in the chord, perhaps a fourth or even an octave if all else fails.

Polyphony in dixieland. In his lengthy chapter on Western African music in *Early Jazz,* Gunther Schuller emphasizes the polyphonic nature of that music. Each player, of larger drums, small drums, gourds, bells, etcetera, is assigned a rhythm, which does not necessarily align to the bar lines of Western music. When these polyrhythms are played together, the result is an ever rotating and evolving series of interrelationships, even though none of the individual rhythms is particularly complex. In other words, a very interesting and complex ensemble results from a few simple musical lines when they are all played together.

This is not unlike what would happen if we were to play the round *Brother John* with a dixieland band:

Concert pitch

Brother John (Interaction of polyphony)



Notice that in the example above, by bar 4 the interaction of simple musical lines has resulted in a rather interesting musical statement.

In other words, the sum of polyphonic music, be it African drumming or a dixieland ensemble, is often highly interesting music, and at times surprising.

It is not the result of one controlling musical arranger, but the outcome of the collaborative work of a group of indivuals, either tribal members, or dixieland players.

No individual knows how it will sound in advance, but each individual is listening to the ensemble and playing his or her part. That is the essence of the collective early jazz ensemble playing that was typical of New Orleans jazz one hundred years ago.

A few basic principles of dixieland polyphony. If you should study a music theory text at this point, you will find that the rules of counterpoint and polyphony are very complex. But we are simply trying to help people play the folk music of dixieland. It is not rocket science, but it does help to mention some useful principles.

A quick polyphonic sketch. The following example is a sketch suggesting what a journeyman jazz clarinet player might do when playing an ensemble chorus on *Bill Bailey* (first half). You will learn to do this in real time, using mostly your intuitive and subconscious abilities, but there are a few points to keep in your conscious mind as you study it.

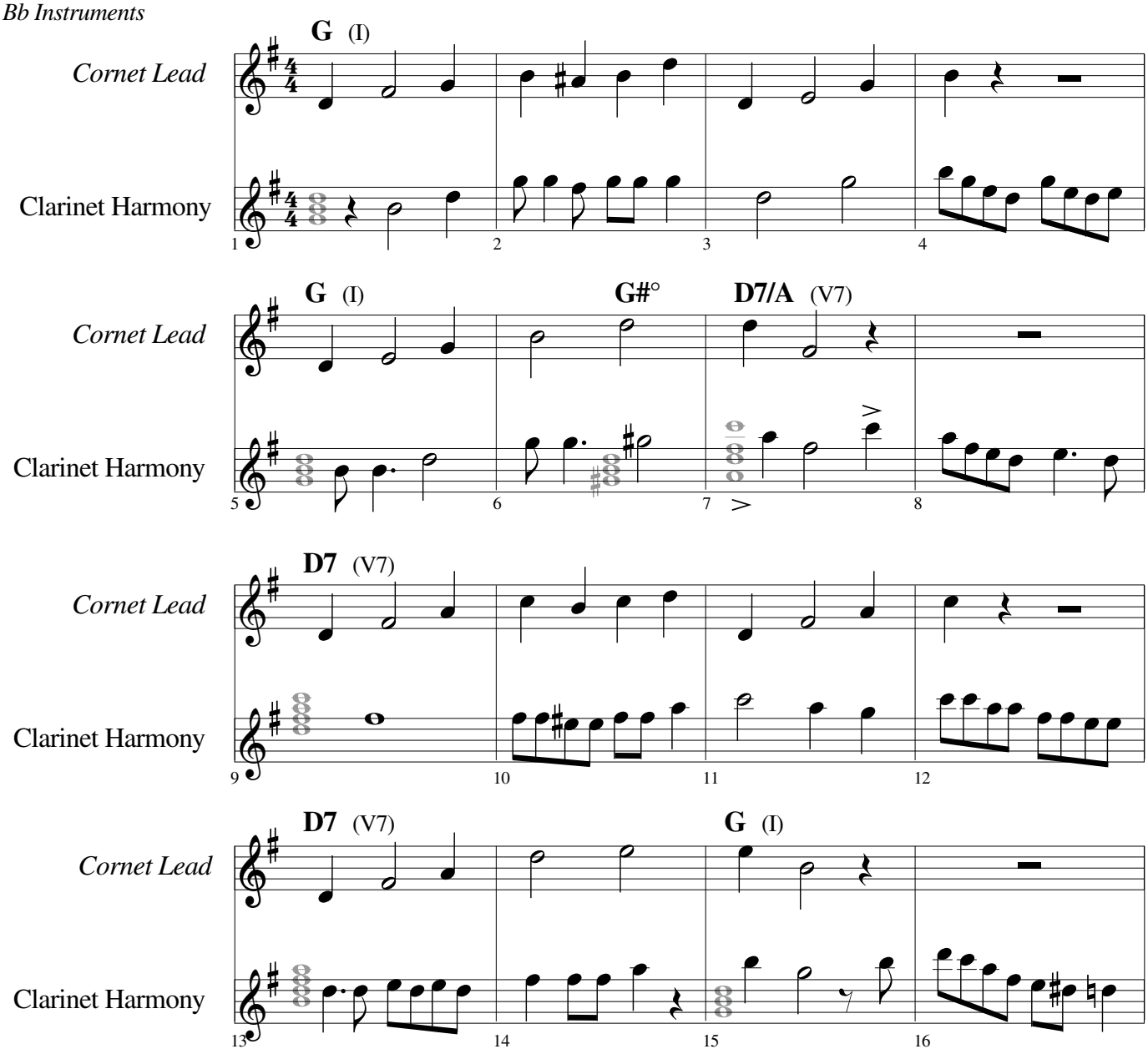
• **Moving lines.** It is important for the clarinet player to listen to the melody (usually cornet) line, and play lines that complement it. Then, when the cornet has a long note, or when the melodic phrase is finished, the clarinet can create more complex moving lines, as in Measures 4, 8, 12, and 16 in the example.

• **Rhythmic propulsion.** The clarinet has the facility to provide forward propulsion with interesting counter-rhythms, which can help create drive in an ensemble passage. Examples are in Measures 2, 5, 6, 10, 13, and 14.

• **Define the chord structure.** I have included the underlying chords in light grey so you can compare how the clarinet harmonies relate to the underlying chord structure and to the melody. Some notes are properly defined as *passing tones* and some are *leading tones*, preparing us for the next chord or melody note. But in every case, it is important that the non-chord notes you choose *sound* right to you. It is certainly acceptable to play unusual notes of *short* duration that create interesting musical tension. That is part of jazz.

Concert F
Bb Instruments

Clarinet Polyphonic Harmony (Bill Bailey chorus, first half)



• **Keep it clean and simple.** The short example above was designed to demonstrate some possibilities for the beginning jazz instrumentalist, but it may also be more complex than is desireable. When you are developing your own polyphonic parts, if you feel that the ensemble is getting muddled and too busy, then listen more and play less. Funny, the best jazz horn players always seem to also have the best taste in these matters.

Four-part polyphony. For simplicity, I have not shown the trombone part that might be played in counterpoint to the two horns above, but in general it will stay well below the clarinet and cornet lines and not conflict. However, when a fourth moving part is added, typically played by a tenor or

alto saxophone, there is a great potential for confusion. The clarinet must stay in the *clarino* register. The tenor sax must find notes and rhythms that don't encroach on the trombone part. All horns must play a little less and leave more openings to avoid a cacophonous mess.

To hear how four horns can be used well, listen to recordings of the fine Eddie Condon bands with Bud Freeman on tenor sax, or to the *Bob Crosby Band* with Eddie Miller.

When a second cornet is added to West Coast style bands, that horn rarely plays a fourth polyphonic line, but usually plays a homophonic hymn-style harmony a third below the lead cornet.

Communication is the key. The most important ingredient for polyphonic success is the communication between the clarinetist and the trombonist. If they each understand their respective instrumental roles, then they will naturally be playing in different rhythm patterns, and selecting different notes.

When a problem occurs, they need to be able to stop the band in rehearsal and work it out: "You take the third, I'll take the fifth here." It does not help to growl: "Get off of my note!" Sometimes weak or beginning players are so insecure in their musicianship that they cannot discuss these issues without getting defensive. Better jazz bands are able to quickly resolve matters, make a note of it, and move on.

Homophony in dixieland. As polyphonic music reflects the African influence on early jazz, so our European musical hertige is filled with homophonic or hymn style harmonies which follow a similar rhythm pattern.

Because our ear is accustomed to hearing the "right" harmonies and chord progressions, this style of jazz is harder to fake. It demands that front line players understand the chords of the song, and have the ability to select the right note. For that reason, homophonic harmonies are either written out for each part, or learned note-for-note in rehearsal.

Bands which have used homophony to great effect include Billy Maxted's *Manhattan Jazz Band*, *The Bob Crosby Band*, and the *Buck Creek Jazz Band*.

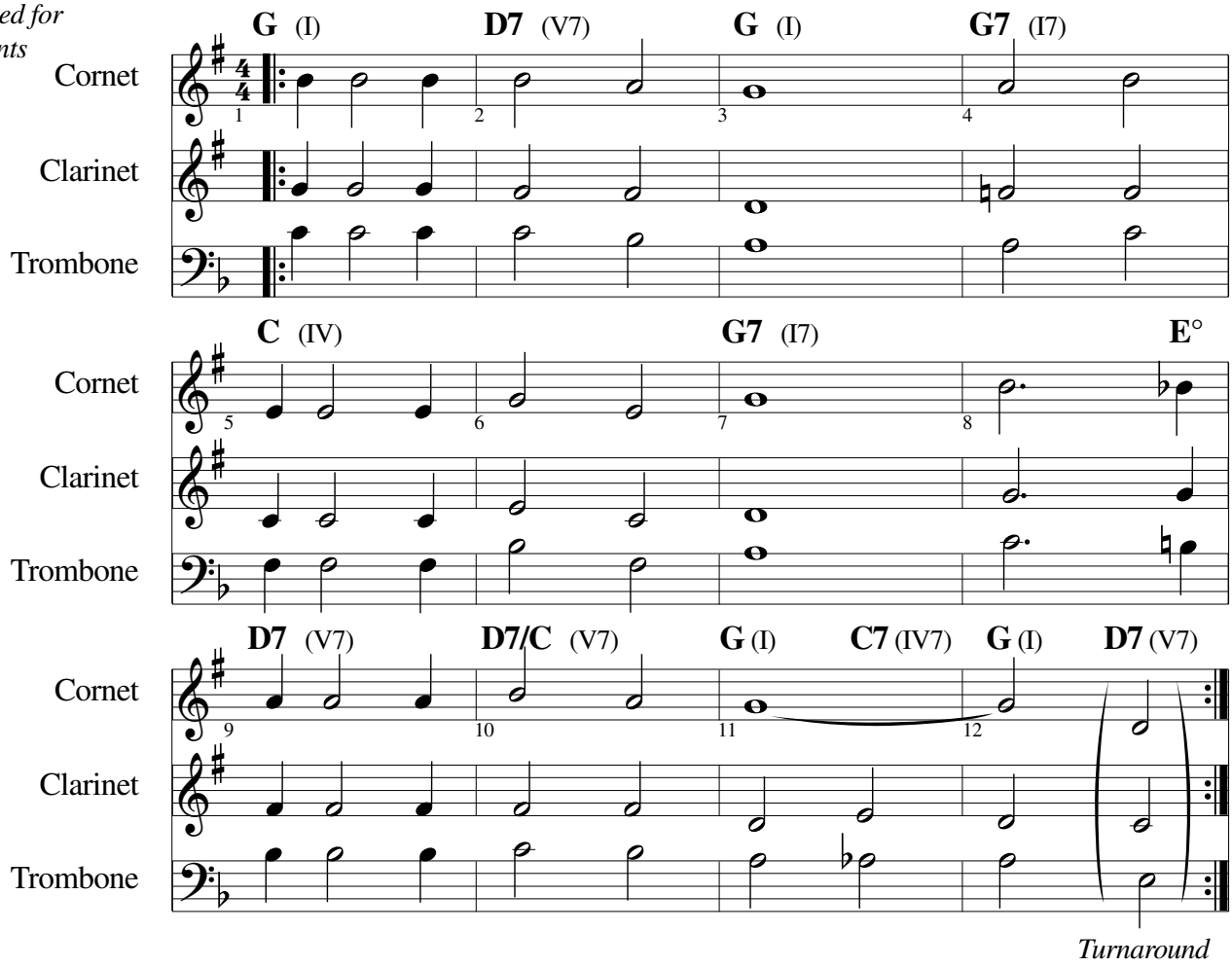
Change in feeling and texture. When a dixieland band has the ability to move between tight block harmonies and loose polyphonic moving lines, it can offer a much wider emotional range than a band which can only play polyphonic harmonies.

The following short and simple arrangement was created by John Skillman of the *Buck Creek Jazz Band*, and dem-

onstrates the basic principles of homophonic playing. When played with controlled dynamics, a harmonized chorus, perhaps at the beginning or end of an arrangement, can be a welcome change of pace.

Concert F
Transposed for
Instruments

Blues (Arranged harmonies, *John Skillman, arr.*)



Turnaround

A beginning dixieland band should be able to play this example without much work. Notice that the ensemble phrasing is much more like concert European music, and depends on precise note attacks and endings. The last V7 chord is called a *turnaround* chord, and leads back to the I chord when the tune is repeated. This is common practice.

When your band plays the second chorus with the cornet line as the lead (melody) and the clarinet and trombone break into polyphonic harmonies, the effect gives an immediate boost of energy to the music.

Train your ear. In the end, the player with the best ear training for intervals, chords, and scales will be best able to fake, or write out, harmonies. These simple examples are merely a starting point. Listen to what other other players do, practice, jam, and play.

A word about the rhythm section. Up to this point, I've focused on the horns, often called "the front line" and I've ignored the rhythm instruments, usually known as "the back line." I apologize, because a solid rhythm section is critical to the success of a band.

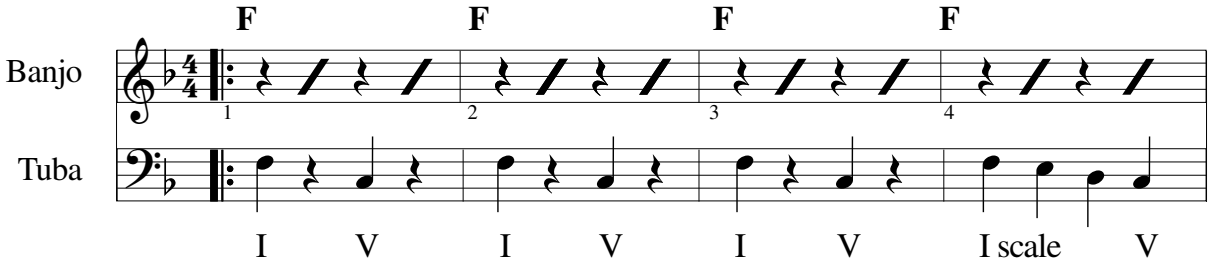
As we mentioned earlier, the rhythm instruments in an early jazz band may vary, depending on the type of music one is playing. An outdoor strolling band might have tuba, banjo, bass drum and snare drum (or washboard). Mellow restaurant music might dictate string bass and guitar only. A band playing for dancing indoors will probably include a trap drum set and piano. A successful jazz festival band might have the budget for four rhythm players: bass, banjo/guitar, piano, and trap drums. And, in the early days of jazz recording, the bass saxophone often substituted for the tuba.

The big picture. In general, we can say three things about a good dixieland rhythm section: First, the playing should be simple and uncluttered. Second, it must be able to maintain the desired tempo without rushing or dragging, and most important, the players must work well together. This last point means that the bandstand should be arranged so that the bass, banjo, drums and piano are close together, that the players can hear one another, and it is helpful if the other players can see the piano keyboard.

Two beat style. Early dixieland tunes such as *High Society* and *1919* originated as street marches, and therefore many songs are played in a two-beat style, with the tuba on beats one and three, and the banjo playing a "back beat" chord on beats two and four. When done fluidly, this can impart a rocking, swing feel.

Likewise, the drummer and pianist play what is called a "boom-chuck" figure, with the bass notes on one and three, and answering snare drum and right hand on two and four.

Two Beat Rhythm (Typical)

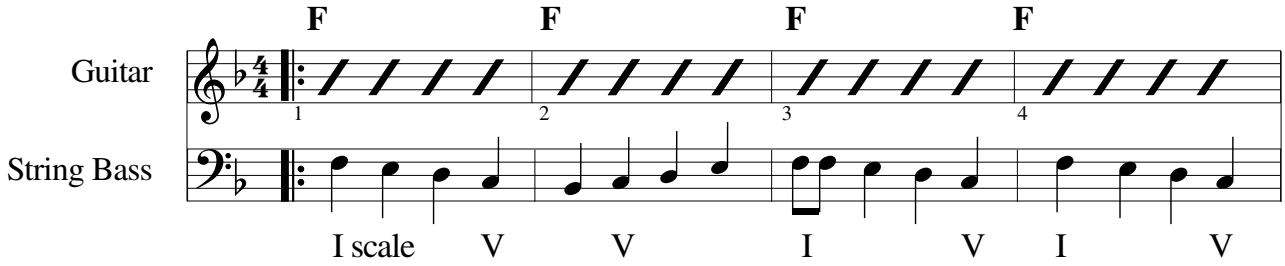


Typically, the tuba creates a bass line with notes on the tonic of the chord (I) and the fifth of the chord (V). The tuba may also play "walking" lines as in bar 4, above, which fit within the scale of the chord.

Four beat style. The string bass, which has been used in jazz since its very beginnings, has the ability to play much longer phrases of bass notes when compared to the tuba, because there is no need to stop for a breath.

This ability results in more interesting "walking" bass lines which usually stay within the scale of the chord. This opens up many creative options for the bass player. When the banjo or guitar plays four beats to the bar, the result is a more driving style which is also typical of later swing music. Here is a simplified example for comparison to two beat style.

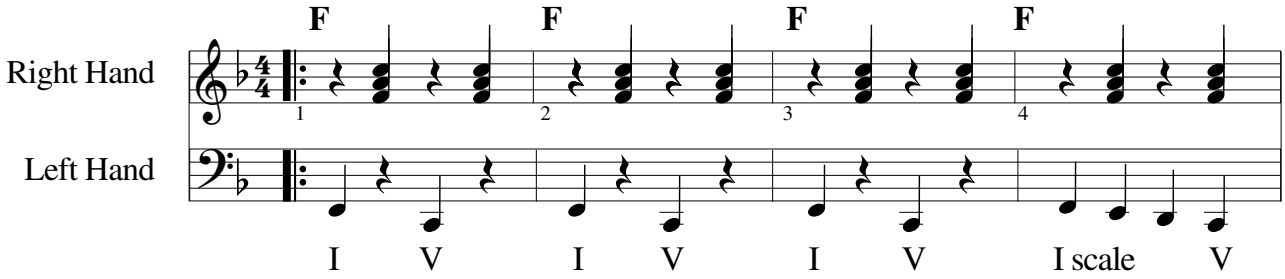
Four Beat Rhythm (Walking Bass Line)



The role of the piano. There are two types of jazz piano player: 1) the solo piano player, who plays all the notes of the composition, including the melody, harmony and rhythm,; and 2) the band piano player, who complements, or "comps" the front line horns with simple rhythm and chord statements.

The first rule is this: The dixieland pianist should *never* double the melody on ensemble passages. The "comp" piano part for the above passages might look something like this:

Piano Comping (Two Beat Style, typical)



The above sketch is simplified and conceptual. An advanced band pianist might not play a standard F chord with the right hand, but might play it in the first or second inversion, or create a more open voicing.

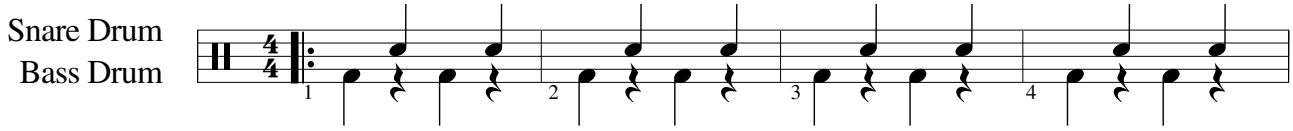
Band piano playing is an art, and you might listen to recordings of players such as Jelly Roll Morton, Art Hodes, Joe Sullivan and Billy Maxted to get a feeling to the range of possibilities, which are beyond the scope of this book.

The early jazz drummer. In the early 1900s, the trap drum kit was still being invented. Photos of early bands such as the *Original Dixieland Jazz Band* show small drum kits consisting of a large bass drum with foot beater, a snare drum, one or two suspended cymbals, a small Indian-style tom tom, a cow bell and a wood block. Innovations such as the foot-operated high-hat cymbal, and the array of large tom toms came much later, in the swing era of the 1930s.

The best dixieland drummers play lightly and sparingly, adding a minimum of fills and frills. Many New Orleans drummers are noted for their good taste, playing subtle press rolls on the snare drum or playing choked cymbal lightly.

We can say generally that drummers who play in a busy swing style or loud rock and roll style rarely fit in with a dixieland band. In most cases, the drummer is asked to play nothing more challenging than the example below, but to do it with a steady, swinging tempo.

Simple Drum Rhythm (Typical)



Yes, many drummers think this is hopelessly boring. But it does not have to be, if the drummer is thoughtful and inventive, playing with dynamics and different colorations. The aspiring drummer should listen to recordings of the old cats like Ray Bauduc and Zutty Singleton, and to contemporary players like Hal Smith and Danny Coots.

A good drummer like Danny Coots, right, can elevate a band's playing, by holding a steady tempo and driving the band forward when needed. Unfortunately, a loud or erratic drummer can be worse than no drummer at all.

CHAPTER 20

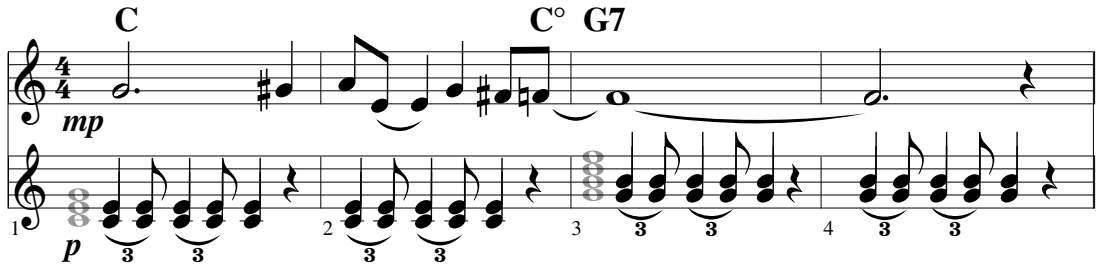
Early jazz riffs.

A *riff* in early jazz is a one- or two-measure repeated motif of harmonized notes. There are generally two types of riffs. (Note that in contemporary jazz, some people confuse *riffs* with solo jazz *phrases* or *patterns*. This is not a historically correct usage of the term.)

Backing riffs. Early New Orleans bands rarely played extended solos. It was more common for every player to blow ensemble harmonies all the time. To make the music more interesting, musicians would make up short harmonized motifs such as this, as heard on a recording of the *Preservation Hall Jazz Band*:

Concert Bb
Transposed for
Bb Instruments

Background Riff (Just A Closer Walk With Thee)

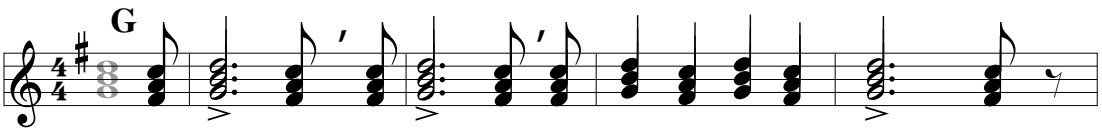


These riffs are intended to be background figures, and should not be played as loud as the melody. Controlled dynamics are critical.

Riff choruses. It is also possible to abandon the melody completely and play an entire chorus consisting of horn harmony riffs at full volume. Listen to Billy Maxted's *Manhattan Jazz Band* riff choruses on *When the Saints Come Marching In*, a 9-minute arrangement which works in many different ensemble riff patterns, such as a four-bar riff similar to this:

Concert F
Transposed for
Bb Instruments

Riff Chorus (When the Saints Go Marching In)



Good riffs rely on your band's musical creativity, and the ability to suggest and execute them on stage. Most other types of music do not give the players this freedom to invent, and play what comes into their minds. In other words, when playing with most dixieland bands, you become an integral creative part of the arrangement, for better or worse.

The early jazz solo.

Before we go into the jazz solo in detail, let's step back and look at the big picture. The first question to ask is, "Why take a jazz solo at all?" In a previous chapter we mentioned that several styles of dixieland historically had very few solos, if any.

The ragtime composer Scott Joplin maintained that extended solo choruses simply grew from the need of dance bands to lengthen a given song to yield a three or four minute dance. This would suggest that in the beginning, jazz solos were not an esthetic decision, but merely an easy and functional way to stretch the music.

The early New Orleans players, both white and black, focused their energies on ensemble playing, broken by solo breaks. Arranged hot dance bands tended to allow slightly longer solos, but very carefully placed within the ensemble structure, as 16-bar or 8-bar solo statements. So it is possible that you can be a successful player in these dixieland band styles without developing advanced solo skills.

Two excellent jazz soloists: Chris Tyle, cornet, leader of the Silver Leaf Jazz Band; and listening, Pat O'Neal, trombonist and leader of Pat O'Neal's Riverboat Jazz Band.

However, as Chicago-style jazz evolved and grew in popularity, the jazz solo became to be an expected skill for all players. This not only presumes the soloist can navigate a full 32-bar chorus, but two, three, or more, as "extended jazz choruses."

What is the purpose of the jazz solo? Today, the jazz solo provides a change in voice, texture, color and style. It provides an opportunity for jazz players to express themselves and be creative. And if the clarinet or saxophone is soloing, it gives brass players time to "rest their chops," that is, rest their embouchure.

Does the player have something to say? A good jazz soloist will have something inventive, something fresh, something exciting, to state with his instrument. It may be a modification of the melody, or an entirely new statement, but the listener will find it musically interesting, perhaps even exciting.

Note that there may be times when, as a potential soloist, that you feel you have nothing to say, nothing to contribute to a given composition. This can happen when you don't know the melody or chords well, when the tune is in an unusual key, or when the song is one you happen to dislike. At that point, you should smile and give a sign to the leader that you don't want a solo on that piece.

Does it tell a story? Many great early jazz soloists ap-

proached each solo based on the mood of the song, and their personal feelings at that moment. So the solo might be cheery and frivolous, or it might be heavy and sorrowful. Emotion and sensitivity are the important elements here, and that will vary greatly depending on the soloist's personality.

Sidney Bechet once said, "You have to have a balance between technique and the ideas you are trying to express. If one has too much to say and no technique, one 'stutters', but if one has lots of technique and nothing to say one will bore the listeners to death."

Does it have a dramatic shape? A really fine early jazz solo will have a beginning, a middle and an end. And it will have a dramatic progression, that is, it will vary in volume, complexity or intensity and build to a climax.

Two jazz legends perform at the 2011 Sacramento Jubilee. Ed Polcer was a player at Eddie Condon's club in New York City, and Pete Christlieb was an important part of the Tonight Show Orchestra. Both can solo in any style music, over any chords.

Types of jazz solos. As the above comments suggest, there are many different ways to approach an early jazz solo. I recently overheard the father of a high school stage band student say, "She can't solo, because her teacher hasn't taught her the chords and scales. That's what it requires to be able to play a solo, chords and scales." Of course, I wish it were that simple, but it takes much more than just chords and scales which we've discussed in the previous chapters to be good at jazz solos and improvization.

The written solo. If a player simply stands up and plays a straight rendition of the melody backed by the rhythm section, that is a solo. It may not be very creative, but if that is all you can do as a beginner, it is a place to start.

Some years back, a PBS television special featured the work of Benny Goodman. The orchestra was an excellent group of studio musicians, and they were every bit as precise and swinging as the best Benny Goodman groups. Benny's solos had been transcribed and were played with fidelity by Henry Cuesta. In this case they were excellent solos, they certainly sounded like jazz solos, and yet they were not improvised or extemporaneous by Cuesta.

Since the beginning of jazz, players have been memorizing other solos, usually by listening to recordings. Dixieland clarinetists should be able to pay reasonable honor to Alphonse Picou's solo on the trio of *High Society* and Matty Matlock's low clarinet solo on *South Rampart Street Parade*.

Early jazz cornetists should know such classics as Bix Beiderbecke's version of *Singin' The Blues*, and Louis Armstrong's virtuoso performance of *West End Blues*.

And trombonists certainly should be familiar with *Ory's Creole Trombone* and *Lassus Trombone*.

If you need a written-out solo when you start playing dixieland, and if you play it well, the audience will probably prefer it to weaker improvised solo.

Transcribing recorded solos will be much more useful than buying books of transcriptions because it will force you to critically listen to pitches and rhythms, and learn to write musical notation. This will improve both your solo playing and your reading of music.

The "framed" solo. Also since the beginning of jazz, players have been building their solos in increments, practicing the component phrases; improving them; rearranging them; until after many performances, they became set solos, small compositions in themselves which the musician "frames" just as one would a finished oil painting.

Historically, many famous solos were fluid and changing on the live bandstand, but once they were recorded, the player was expected to repeat them note-for-note by adoring audiences.

This expectation to repeat "extemporaneous" solos as-recorded came to annoy all the great jazz soloists, from Louis Armstrong to the present day. I can only hope that someday a young person reading this book will create a jazz solo so memorable that he or she is forced to repeat it thousands of times in front of enthusiastic crowds.

Sketching a written solo. On the following page, I've sketched out a modest slow blues solo based on the I•IV•V chord changes in the same way that you might do it.

Before you start, you should think a moment about what mood and texture you are trying to create in your solo. In this case, I wanted a relaxed, loping feeling with some space in the solo. I did not want a busy or aggressive feeling. Beyond that, I had no preconceptons of the solo structure.

First, take a sheet of music paper and pencil in the bar lines and chord changes. If you don't know how to spell the chords, pencil in the notes as I have indicated in gray.

Second, use your instrument to play the chord arpeggios until you are familiar with them. You might also enter the chords into Band In A Box in your computer, and play the chord changes as a music *bed* in a continuous loop.

Third, play some music phrases or motifs that fit well within the chords. This is a matter of trial and error, based on what sounds good to you. Don't try to make it perfect as a composition, just play what is in your heart.

Fourth, take a pencil and jot down the pitches you play as little dots or note heads without stems. You don't have to as-

sign rhythmic values to the notes yet.

Fifth, when you have a pitch outline that seems right to you, give time values to the notes, erase, and move them to the desired place on or off the beat.

Finally, play your solo on your instrument, edit it, add expressive markings and phrase endings as you need them.

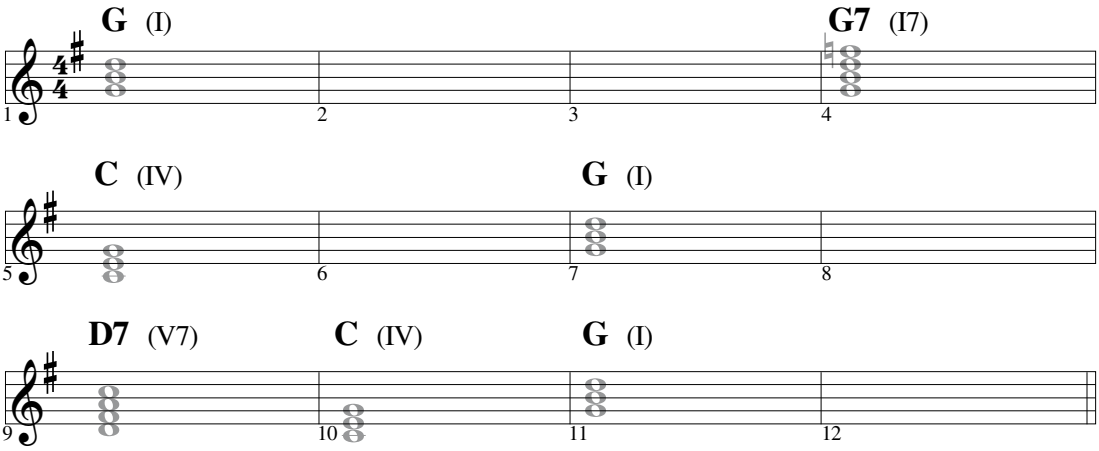
If your music reading and writing skills are not developed, you might also decide to place the notes into the melody line of your Band In A Box file. Then, you can hear your notation played back, and you can correct it, or edit it to make the solo more interesting.

Remember that in an early jazz solo, notes are more likely to stay on the underlying chord changes than in later swing or bebop styles of soloing. If you study the solo example above, you'll find that most of the notes fit within the chord changes.

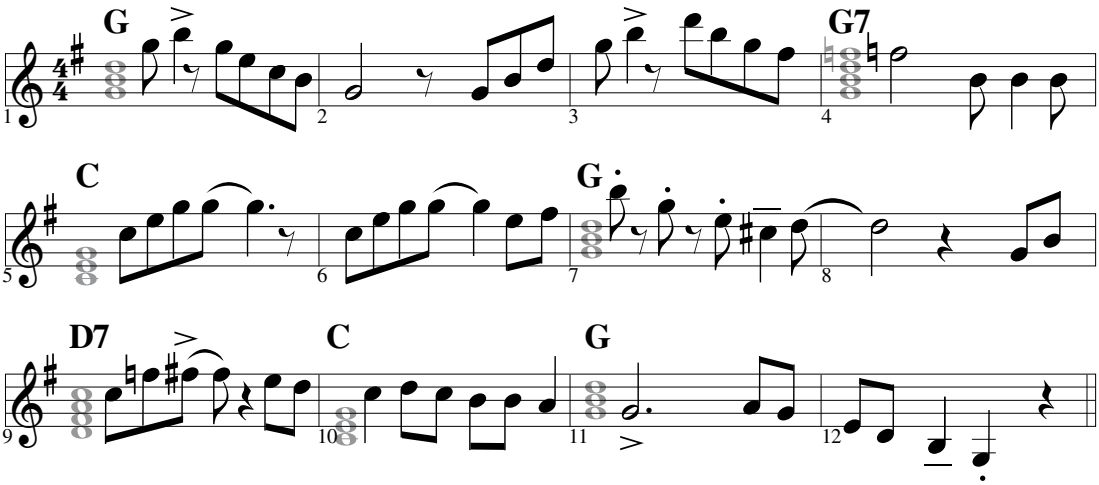
Patterns for jazz. Sidney Bechet frequently used the analogy of speaking compared to the jazz solo. He is reputed

Concert F Transposed for Bb Clarinet

Blues Chords (Chorus, Three chord blues)



A Clarinet Blues Solo (Chorus, Three chord blues) ♩ = 100

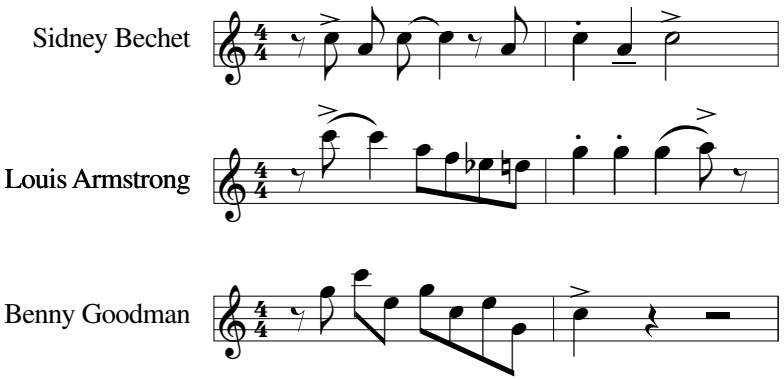


to have told a young French clarinetist who played a rather halting and lame solo, "You wouldn't talk like that. Complete the phrase as you would speak a sentence." In other words, make a statement. To carry forward the analogy, *notes* are the alphabet, and *patterns* or *licks* are the words; put them together effectively and you have a complete *phrase*, or even a long flowing sentence.

As you listen to jazz recordings, you will learn the language of jazz patterns. Every jazz soloist has favorite personal licks, which show up throughout their career in various places. As examples I have jotted down some patterns that reappear in the lifetime works of Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman. If used too often, they become *jazz clichés*, but there is no harm in learning the patterns that make up jazz. For extensive practice on patterns, see Jerry Coker's book, *Patterns for Jazz*.

Unfortunately, just memorizing a lot of jazz patterns in various keys and stringing them together does not automatically make a superior jazz solo. That is where your individual artistry must enter in.

Familiar Early Jazz Patterns



Jazz quotes. In contemporary jazz, it is considered witty to insert portions of popular song melodies, or *quotes*, into jazz solos. This practice is generally frowned on in early jazz circles. As leader Bert Barr of *The Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band* has been known to growl to a soloist, "If I had wanted to play that song, I would have called it."

Hot or cool. When you are developing solos for early jazz it is important to understand the difference between *hot jazz* and *cool jazz*.

Early jazz is *hot* because it shows exuberance, emotion, enthusiasm, and intuitive performance. It values showmanship. Both dixieland jazz and swing music found space for the hot soloist, such as Bix Beiderbecke in the *Paul White-*

man Band and Jimmy Dorsey in the Dorsey brothers bands.

Cool jazz, on the other, beginning in the bebop era of the 1940s and continuing to this day, values the intellectual approach to jazz solos. Extended chords and chord substitutions are common. Showmanship is, well, not *cool*.

For many skilled cool jazz players, making the transition back to hot, early jazz solos is difficult. It must be said that both early jazz musicians and audiences find a solo in the style of Charlie Parker or Miles Davis to be out of place.

The extemporaneous solo. Jazz critics place a high value on the extemporaneous solo, one that is a totally new combination of notes, created on the spot, in real time, based on the inpiration of the moment and the genius of the jazz player. Indeed, all jazz players aspire to this level of creativity, and we hope that the muse will strike us each time we solo.

The truth is that only the most brilliant of jazz soloists come up with a totally new invention each time they play a solo chorus. Most professionals will build the solo using the component patterns and phrases that they practice.

How to practice extemporaneous solos. Sketching out all our jazz solos is obviously impractical. For many years, it was possible to practice extended improvisation with Jamie Aebersol's excellent play along books with recorded accompanyment, although early jazz tunes were not prominent. Today, one can use Band In A Box software and quickly program the early jazz song chord changes and set up a loop to practice them as long as you want.

What makes a good early jazz solo? It is my observation that dixieland jazz solos depend on four interrelated factors:

- **Inspiration.**
- **Melody awareness.**
- **Chordal awareness.**
- **Instrumental technique.**

If one listens to individual instrumentalists and their solos, one can place them at different points on this graphic. For example, solos by Bix Beiderbecke and George Lewis are long on emotion. Benny Goodman and Louis Armstrong are strong on range and technique. Sidney Bechet and Artie Shaw had a special ability to imply the melody, or create new melodies, while soloing. Larry Shields and Buddy DeFranco were more likely to arpeggiate chords vertically. The ultimate soloist might show a perfect balance but we are all different.

The intuitive approach. If the instrumental student studies the many excellent books on jazz improvisation recom-

mended later in this chapter, he or she will look very hard to find mention of the intuitive approach to jazz soloing. The unstated question is, "can superior jazz soloing be taught, or is it a matter of individual genius?"

The 1920s were filled with early jazz musicians like Bix Beiderbecke, and Pee Wee Russell who relied on their musical instincts, their ears, bootleg liquor, and other performance enhancers, to guide their solos. These musicians delighted in the "freak players" who found unexpected and shocking intervals and effects when they soloed. At a very early stage in jazz, they were playing "outside the chords" without really knowing it, in a small way predicting what was to become *free jazz* in the 1960s.

The old fashioned approach requires personal interaction, and one can still find it in dixieland jam sessions, jazz camps, or private studies with a jazz clarinetist. Just remember that it is a slower process, not very efficient, and random rather than systematic.

The intellectual approach. Obviously, I believe that the fundamental principles of playing jazz solos can be taught or I would not bother to write this chapter. Here are some of the most popular components of jazz instructional programs today, and you may find all of them valuable:

- Study and practice of chords and arpeggiations.
- Study of scales and interval etudes.
- Study of jazz note patterns.
- Playing with music bed recordings and software.
- Study and transcription of noteworthy jazz solos.
- Playing along with jazz recordings.
- Learning to read music with jazz articulation.

Ten steps to pure inspiration. This technique of developing jazz lead lines and solos has been credited to many people, including the saxophonist Lee Konitz. The idea is to play a composition through ten times, beginning with the exact melody as written, and departing from it more with each successive chorus, until on the tenth chorus, you are playing an entirely new jazz composition or countermelody.

Here's one way to describe the possibilities:

Chorus 1. Play the melody as written, very straight with no embellishments.

Chorus 2. Play the melody with more personal feeling.

Chorus 3. Play the melody with more slight variations in note values.

Chorus 4. Play the melody with the addition of more scalar runs or passing notes (notes not in the chord or scale.)

Chorus 5. Add more chordal arpeggiations to the fundamental melody structure.

Chorus 6. Depart further from the melody, incorporating notes which fit in the chord progression.

Chorus 7. Continue this process, experiment and take more chances.

Chorus 8. Continue to listen to your own inventions, and develop the themes that you have played.

Chorus 9. Push your own solo discoveries farther.

Chorus 10. This chorus is your own song, "pure inspiration." It may not be perfect, or the best solo ever played, but it is yours.

Of course, to accomplish this well, it helps to have accompaniment which states the underlying rhythm and chords to the song, either human, recorded, or electronic. As mentioned elsewhere, the Band In A Box computer program is very helpful when developing and practicing solos.

Some resource books. At the beginning level, Michael Miller's *Complete Idiot's Guide to Solos and Improvisation* is the most understandable and comprehensive book I have found. As you progress, Jerry Coker's books *Improvising Jazz* and *Patterns for Jazz* contain a wealth of advanced information on soloing, song structure, and jazz chords.

Play what's in you. No matter what you study, your goal should always be to play the music which is inside you. You'll get more satisfaction from performing, and our audience will respond more warmly.

Here's your goal: to solo like these guys, Bob Draga, clarinet; Bob Schulz, cornet, Jim Fryer, trombone. You can do it, but it takes commitment to your instrument.

CHAPTER 22

Study, practice, rehearsal.

By this point in the book, you've been presented with a large amount of information to learn. It is important for the jazz player to understand the difference between studying, practicing and rehearsing.

Study. This is the process of learning a passage or composition critically. It may involve playing your instrument, for example if you are learning a melody or solo by playing along with a record. But more often, it involves looking critically at the music. What is the chord progression? How can I best finger this run or arpeggio? What notes make the best harmony? What notes of this phrase need to be emphasized? What are the dynamics?

You'll want a lead sheet and soft pencil. When you finish studying a piece, it may be heavily marked up, but you will be able to remember what you've learned when you practice it.

Practice. For our purposes in dixieland, practice means gaining, and maintaining, fluency on your instrument. Practice presumes repetition— playing a passage, composition, or solo over and over until it comes out the instrument the way you have studied it and intend it to sound. This does not mean blindly playing a piece over and over while making the same mistakes. Instead, practice should be undertaken with focus and seriousness, while listening critically to the results. An electronic recorder can be useful here. Play and record, then listen critically. Repeat as needed.

On the one hand, practice is physical, maintaining your airstream, embouchure, tongue and finger coordination. On the other hand, practice aids the mental aspects of playing, helping to get the music into your subconcious so it becomes nearly automatic. Musicians talk of "getting the music under your fingers" and occasions when "the music played itself" after they arrive at a full understanding of a compostion.

Study and practice are individual pursuits that each player in a dixieland band can, and should, make time for each day. If you are in a band in which the individual players don't practice daily, then the players are not keeping up their "chops, " which can be a serious problem with both reed and brass players.

Here's the familiar old saying about practice, one more time: "When I don't practice for a day, I know it. When I don't practice for two days, the other musicians know it. When I don't practice for a week, everyone knows it."

Rehearsal. When two or more band members get together for practice, you have a rehearsal. By my definition, rehearsal for a dixieland band is a collective group event.

Of course, the rehearsal of a tightly arranged hot dance band is much like that of a concert band. It is primarily a matter of playing the charts with accuracy and style.

The other dixieland styles we've discussed use their rehearsal times to work out their arrangements collectively, and so rehearsal becomes more of a creative act.

In my experience, the value of rehearsal time varies with each dixieland band. Some weaker players don't like to rehearse, and their bands reflect the lack of rehearsal with poor beginnings, endings, and a generally uncoordinated, ragged feel. Better bands enjoy rehearsal, remember the arrangements that are developed, and give tighter performances because of it.

Rehearsal goals. Getting together a band to socialize and run through the same old tunes does not produce much improvement. It is far better that the band leader or musical director plan a specific list of tunes, passages, transitions, or arrangements that need to be learned or polished. A focused band can rehearse introductions and endings without playing an entire composition, and accomplish a great deal in a few hours.

There are three primary reasons to hold a rehearsal: 1. Preparing for an upcoming performance; 2. Building a polished repertoire; and 3. Learning new material.

Every player should arrive at the rehearsal having studied and practiced the material, with their equipment and "chops" in good shape. This is no time to try out new clarinet reeds.

Retaining what you rehearsed. A reading dixieland band, working with lead sheets and simple "roadmap" directions, should be able to pencil in the important points of an informal "head arrangement" and refer back to it at the next rehearsal, and on the bandstand.

A non-reading band must rehearse more frequently, because the players must memorize everything. To give a tight performance, a non-reading band will require many more run-throughs, and often needs to rehearse the complete tune from start to finish.

A rule of thumb about rehearsal. Here is Campbell's Rule about rehearsals for jazz band: The better the individual players, the less rehearsal time is needed; the weaker the individual players, the more rehearsal time is needed.

CHAPTER 23

Joining or starting a dixieland band.

So at this point, if you've taken this book to heart, you are a budding jazz player ready to join an established dixieland band, or to start your own. Over the past twenty years, I've had the opportunity to play with a wide variety of dixieland bands at various levels, and I offer these tips in the hope that they will help you avoid some of the mistakes I have made.

Joining an established band. When a player is called to join an established band, or to substitute with one, there is a special need to study the band style through its book or recordings, practice them, and sometimes to transcribe existing solos.

At the highest professional level, there are a handful of players nationally who have the skills to substitute on short notice. These are players who know many early jazz songs, can play in a variety of styles, have excellent technique, and who are willing to prepare extensively to fit into the band's style.

Will the band work out for you? Whether you join an existing band, or start your own, here are some important points to consider.

Local is better. There is a major advantage in playing in a band with members who live in the same town, both in terms of gathering for a performance, and holding rehearsals. Believe me, I have seen what can happen when band members are spread out. In the case of the *Oregon Jazz Band* some years ago, we had players spread across four hundred miles of the state. A short rehearsal turned into a 12-hour day for some players.

Only one leader. Bands which have a single strong leader have many advantages over cooperative bands. They can make decisions quickly. The leader, or his musical director, can define and rehearse the band more efficiently. And there is much less time debating how to do things.

Players who get along personally. I cannot stress this point enough. It does not help to have fine musicians if they can't get along with the rest of the band. There are many parameters— age, marital status, gender, use of substances, smoking, diet, religion, social attitudes, politics— which can divide a band. So you might as well find people who are compatible. You will enjoy your travel, rehearsal, waiting, and performance times much more.

Players who can communicate. The ideal band member would be a secure and sensitive personality with good social

skills, a degree in music and psychology, plus the ability to speak, sing, read and write music, and conduct. As you might guess, most jazz musicians fall short of this perfect mix. But at the very least, you need people who can take criticism, respond to suggestions rationally, and express their musical thoughts, either by discussion, playing, or by notating them. A band of players which can't communicate their feelings about the music is best to be avoided.

Players with musical skills. Most of us have played in dixieland bands at some time where skills were rudimentary. If the players are young, then we hope that the skills will improve. Some will, and some won't. So if you have a choice, pick the best musicians possible for your band. It makes the band immediately better, and also will elevate the playing of the other musicians.

Players who enjoy early jazz. There are many skilled musicians today who are are not the right fit for a dixieland band. Some who are swing and bebop or contemporary pop players at heart, may take a gig with your band out of economic need, all the while hating early jazz. Most trumpet players today are more inclined to the "cool" style of Miles Davis than the "hot" style of Louis Armstrong, so they will always be a bit out of place in a hot band. It is always better to find players who feel and enjoy early jazz, because they understand it and know more of the repertoire.

Amateur or pro. If you are playing for your own enjoyment and to perform at community events, there are few legal issues to worry about. If you play for money, there are many business, legal, and tax issues that will crop up. You should consult your tax advisor on how to account for income earned through casual music performances.

Have a business agreement. All bands start with great hopes and fine intentions. Most bands eventually change personnel, or fall apart entirely. Therefore, it is always useful to have a letter of intent, or a written contract, that explains the legal status of the band and your position in it. There are a number of affordable paperback books on practical music law that are worth consulting, both to secure any legal rights or monies you might be entitled to, and also to avoid any liabilities that might crop up from being a part of the band. I cannot give any legal advice, but I recommend that you do your diligence at the beginning, when you join or form a band. It is always too late to think of these things at the end of a band relationship.

Some final thoughts.

If you have read your way through the book to this point, you understand that the subject of performing early jazz is extensive, and perhaps larger than you anticipated. That is to say, this book is merely a starting point on your journey. The music is in you; I am just trying to help you express it.

In our jazz improvisation workshops at the Portland Dixieland Jazz Society, we get a number of persistent questions, especially from skilled reading musicians who are used to playing the notes on the page. The transition to listening, hearing, learning the chords, and playing notes spontaneously is very difficult for many well-trained musicians, especially the most intellectual and thoughtful ones.

For example, we get questions like: It appears that as the chords in a song change, the song also effectively changes keys? Why? How do I bridge the gap between the written notes or chord symbols that I see, and what I want to invent on my instrument?

I had these same questions, and I have only partially explained the answers here, but in my quest, I have become a better jazz player. The answer for me was practice, jamming, performing, analyzing the structure of songs, and listening to other, better musicians. There is always something to learn.

If you don't play your instrument on a *daily basis*, your progress will be very slow.

If you try to understand everything about jazz intellectually, you will be frustrated, because you have to *feel* the music. When playing in a concert band a few years ago, I came across the notation for a certain passage which was marked, "With Feeling." I impolitely raised my hand and asked the conductor if that meant that the rest of the arrangement was to be played "Without Feeling?" He was not amused.

The important benefit of our electronic era is that this book can be continually revised and updated, and then provided free via the internet.

The next page lists just a few of the many resources available to you. An internet search will reveal many more. I hope this book gets you started on your jazz journey, and also hope that the next edition will be even better.

Early jazz fans have revived the New Orleans tradition of the "second line" in which enthusiastic listeners marched along with their favorite jazz bands, using parasols to shelter from the hot sun. Today, such outrageous enthusiasm is foreign to more modern types of jazz.

Suggested reading and resources.

Some of these resources are out of print, but can still be found by searching used books on Amazon.com.

ON EARLY JAZZ

Early Jazz, *by Gunther Schuller*
The Lost Chord, *by Richard M. Sudhalter*
The Swing Era, *by Gunther Schuller*
The Best of Jazz, *by Humphrey Littleton*
We Called It Music, *by Eddie Condon*
Texas Shout, How Dixieland Jazz Works, *by Tex Wyndham*

EARLY JAZZ AND SWING NEWS

The Syncopated Times, *1809 Whitesboro St., Utica NY, 13502-3719* Web: *syncopatedtimes.com*

ON BASIC MUSIC THEORY

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Music Theory, *by Michael Miller*
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Solos and Improvisation, *by Michael Miller*

ON JAZZ PERFORMANCE

Improvising Jazz, *by Jerry Coker*
Patterns for Jazz, *by Jerry Coker*

ON PERFORMANCE

Music, The Brain, and Ecstasy, *by Robert Jourdain*
The Inner Game of Music, *by Barry Green*
Free Play, *by Stephen Nachmanovitch*
Effortless Mastery, *by Kenny Werner*
The Two Second Advantage, *by Vivek Ranadive and Kevin Maney*

PRINTED MUSIC

The Real Dixieland Book, *Hal Leonard publisher*
Authentic Dixieland Original Arrangements for Dixieland Band, *The Big 3 Music Corporation, NY, NY.*

INTERNET ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

The Creole Jazz Band Fake Books, *www.creolejazzband.com*
Simply Early Jazz, arrangements, *www.simplyearlyjazz.com*
Facebook page: *Dixieland Jazz and Our Kind of Music.*
University of Chicago Library, *Guide to the Charles B. Anderson Fake Books Collection 1870-1998*

ON BUSINESS AND LEGAL ISSUES

All You Need to Know About the Music Business, *by Donald S. Passman*

Four bass saxophones performing with the Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band at the 2010 Seaside Oregon Jazz Festival. Left to right: John Goodrich, Peter Meijers, Jim Buchmann, Paul Woltz

Introduction to Playing Early Jazz

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS OF ALL AGES

by Rick Campbell

This ebook may be distributed and used free of charge in the non-profit cause of teaching early jazz.