

# **An Approach to Jazz Piano**

**Fifth Edition**

**Charles Austin**

# Introduction

This book is an attempt to address the techniques of piano playing as applied to the playing of jazz. It is also an attempt to address theoretical knowledge, and the application of coherent thinking when improvising jazz music. Many aspects of preparation are outlined, including scales, chords, chord symbols, chord/scale relationships, voicings, voice-leading, and the creation of melody.

This volume outlines the materials, theory, basics of melody, and voicing styles which should generate a foundation upon which to build upon any jazz piano/keyboard approach. The material is progressive and is based on the acquisition of the simpler materials to the point where they can be subconsciously recalled. The important area of jazz rhythm is outlined in the rhythm preface regarding the playing of a swing feel that “swings” through note-for-note dynamics. The connections between rhythmic feels are also outlined.

There is no conscious attempt to link the language of jazz to classical thinking and terminology, but there are some connections that are referred to when they can be utilized in the language of jazz. The student approaching this book should have some background in playing the piano. A working knowledge of scales and some classical theory will also be of benefit.

The whole idea of jazz is to play by ear, a skill that should be practised by learning tunes by ear and working them out both harmonically and melodically in keys. The practice of Solfege is helpful in the understanding of the tonal nature of melody. Hearing/playing, hearing/writing (transcribing), and reading/hearing/playing are skills that should be acquired. Pre-hearing and then playing ideas as they are heard is a skill to be practised. Many beginning jazz players play whatever they can rather than working towards a workable musical idea. This book stresses musical thinking habits from the beginning — players are encouraged to work with simple ideas and with repetition, learn how to develop these ideas and build compositionally from there.

I hope this text will help with the organization of material and provide the thoroughness needed to build a comprehensive, engaging, and professional approach to the glorious task at hand. A patient, consistent, balanced approach is the most obvious requirement for success.

Charles Austin

# Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Rhythm Preface.....	(i)
1 The Keyboard: Interval Building Blocks .....	1
2 Intervals from the Major Scale: The First Source Scale.....	2
3 Inversions of Intervals .....	3
4 Compound Intervals .....	4
5 Key Signatures Outlined .....	5
6 Simple and Compound Intervals in Major Keys.....	6
7 The Solfege System and Directional Tendencies of Scale Tones .....	9
8 Common Intervallic Sequences .....	10
9 The Remaining Source Scales/Sequences .....	14
10 Intervals in Sequence: A Matrix .....	16
11 Triads .....	20
12 Open Voiced Triads .....	33
13 Triadic Harmony in Popular Tune Style .....	37
14 Voicing Melody in the Right Hand .....	43
15 7th Chords .....	48
16 Chord Voicing Part I: An Integrated Left Hand 7th Chord Voicing Approach — A Stride and Shell Technique .....	61
17 Harmonic Function Part I: Tonic, Dominant, and Subdominant .....	67
18 The Major Scale, Modes, Scale-Tone 7th Chords and Basic Improvisation ....	72
19 Improvising on Chord Changes: Phrasing and Guide Tones .....	81
20 Chord Qualities/Extensions in Chord Symbols and 7th-Chord-Tone Extension-Substitution Voicing Solutions .....	94
21 Chord Voicing Part II: An Integrated Left Hand Chord Voicing Approach — Guide Tones and Extensions .....	123
22 Source Scales and Scale-Tone Intervals .....	144
23 Source Scale Construction and Tetrachords .....	149
24 Source Scales and Scale Tone Chords, Part I: Diatonic Scales .....	161
25 Source Scales and Scale Tone Chords, Part II: The Symmetrical Scales — The Diminished and Whole-Tone Scales .....	166
26 Scale/Chord Source-Scale Overview .....	174
27 Secondary Dominants: Conserving the Sense of Key .....	179

28	Secondary Dominants: Function, Source Scales, Modal Borrowing and Associated Keys .....	184
29	Secondary Dominants and the Emergence of Dominant Substitution: Tritone Substitution and Sub. V7 .....	189
30	Secondary Dominants and Improvisation .....	194
31	Secondary Dominants and Related ii Chord/Scales: Conserving the Key .....	198
32	Secondary Dominants and Inside to Outside Scale Choices .....	205
33	SubV7 (Tritone—SubV7), Secondary SubV7, and Related II .....	217
34	Harmonic Function Part II: bVIIIMa7 Subdominant, Subdominant Minor, and Modal Borrowing (part II) .....	221
35	Harmonic Function Part III:Tonic Minor Chord/Scales and Minor ii—V .....	230
36	Harmonic Function Part IV: Diminished 7th Chord Function: A Justification of Dominant 7th Chord Motion .....	237
37	Related Dominants, Related ii—V’s and Chord shapes from a Symmetrical Diminished Chord/Scale .....	251
38	The Blues Part 1: Form, Blues Scales, and Improvisation .....	259
39	The Blues Part II: A Vehicle for Progressive Harmonic Change .....	268
40	Chord Families/Chord Function Versus Chord Function/Chord Families: a Cross-Reference Review .....	275
41	Chord Voicing Part III: Two Hands .....	280
42	Pluralities In Extended Chords: Polychords, the Identification of Chord Stacks Between the Hands .....	289
43	Slash-Chords: Chord Forms over Bass Notes, Creating Chord Quality .....	297
44	The “Sound”: A Slash-chord Approach to Jazz Piano Voicing .....	302
45	Pentatonic Scale/Chords: Voicings, Pentatonic-shapes, Altered Pentatonics, Source Scales, and Function .....	330
46	Open 7th-Chord Voicings: Drop 2, Drop 3, Drop 2 & 4 And Use As Passing Chord Harmony .....	356
47	Comping: Articulation, Time Feels, Voicing-Style-Approach, And Form .....	383
48	The Thickening of a Melody Line: Locked-Hands, Slash-Chord, Drop 2, Pentatonics, Quartal Harmony .....	391
49	Scales with an Added Chromatic Passing Tone .....	399
50	Polarized Passing-Tone Scales and Improvisation .....	410
51	Neighbour Tones in Jazz: Diatonic/Chromatic-Approach Tones, Deflection, Change-Tones .....	416
	Index.....	433
	Glossary of Terms .....	437

# **An Approach to Jazz Piano**

## **Volume 1**

**Edition 4, 2011**

***Charles Austin***