

# Why Jazz Horn Players Should Learn Jazz Piano/ Keyboard

By Austin Vickrey

# Discussion Topics

- Understanding theory and chords/harmony
- Using jazz piano as a compositional aid
- Using jazz piano as a teaching tool for students
- Increasing/deepening song/tune knowledge
- Basic jazz piano voicing
- Sources for further study

# Understanding Theory and Chords

- Jazz piano is a great way to further your own understanding of music theory, chords, and harmony.
- The piano is visual and allows you to actually “see” what it is you’re hearing/playing (Similar to guitar or bass)
- Learning jazz piano assists in providing a basic understanding and knowledge of how chords are constructed, how they are used in songs, and what they sound like.
- Any chord that is played on the piano can be translated to a wind instrument by the use of arpeggios (broken chords).
- Working through chord arpeggios on your horn is a great exercise in ear training and technique and will help improve your ability to get around on your own instrument.

# Starter course for learning theory and chords

- Private teacher - on your instrument or on piano
- Sign up for an online college intro to music/theory course open to non-matriculated or non-music major students. (Local: SPC, USF. National: [berklee.edu](http://berklee.edu))
- [www.musictheory.net](http://www.musictheory.net) - This is my favorite source for learning and teaching beginning general music theory. It's FREE and very helpful!

# Jazz Piano as a Compositional/Arranging Aid

- Understanding theory/harmony/chords on the piano is a useful tool in composing and arranging.
- Able to work out your original ideas in a different way or hear something different that you haven't thought of before.
- Using chord voicings as a way to arrange horn parts for your musical ensemble

# Jazz Piano as a Teaching Tool for Students

- Allows you to visually demonstrate concepts of theory, chords, harmony
- Use jazz piano to accompany students studying improvisation on songs or developing ideas for certain chords/harmony

# Increasing “Tune” Knowledge

- Studying jazz typically requires learning songs from the tradition
  - The Great American Songbook, “Standards,” “Jazz Standards”
- Playing chords on the piano to a song that you are learning increases your understanding of the tune and assists in retention and memorization.
- You can “see” and hear how the chords in a particular song relate to each other, rather than relying on a backing track or an actual piano player.
- “Cross-platform” learning - Learning a concept or idea on multiple instruments also assists in retention and memorization.

# Some Basic Piano Voicings for simple chords

- Basic Triad - Root, 3rd, 5th
  - Inversions of Triads - 1st and 2nd inversion
- 7th Chords - Root, 3rd, 5th, 7th
  - Inversions of 7th Chords - 1st, 2nd, and 3rd inversions
- These can be played with one hand or two hands

# Voicings for Simple Chords

- Triads
  - Can be played with two hands by doubling the chord tones in the chord
  - Can be spread out to add a more open texture
  - Can be stacked closely to add a thicker texture
  - Block Chords - Close chord tone voicings

# Shell Voicings

- Root of the chord in the left hand
- Chord tones in the right hand
  - 3-6-9, 3-7-9 (\*3-5-9 for a more basic sound)
  - 7-3-5, 7-3-6
  - 4-7-9 (suspended chord), 7-9-4-6 \*Dominant chord voicings

# “Fourthly” Modal Voicing

- These work well using the Dorian mode (a type of minor scale built starting on the 2nd degree of the major scale)
- Voicings maintain the interval of a fourth between each chord tone
  - D Dorian voicings - D-G-C, E-A-D, F-B-E, etc.

# II-V7-I Voicings

- II-V7-I: Common chord progression found in many “jazz” tunes and standards
- Useful voicings to get started with
  - II - minor 7th
  - V7 - dominant 7th
  - I - major 7th

# II-V7-I Voicings

- 1-7-3-5 Voicing
  - Root and 7th in the LH, 3rd and 5th in the RH
  - \*Add the 9th in the RH to make it sound more colorful.
    - Example: Cmaj7 - LH: C-B, RH: E-G-D\*
- 1-3-7-9
  - Root and 3rd in the LH, 7th and 9th in the RH
  - \*Add the 5th in the RH to make it sound more full.
    - Example: Cmaj7 - LH: C-E, RH: B-D-G\*

# II-V7-I Voicings

- II-V7-I voicing #1
  - | Dm7 | G7 | Cmaj7 |
  - Dmin7 - 1-7-3-5 (D-C-F-A)
  - G7 - 1-3-7-9 (G-B-F-A)
  - Cmaj 7 - 1-7-3-5 (C-B-E-G)

# II-V7-I Voicings

- II-V7-I voicing #2
  - | Dm7 | G7 | Cmaj7 |
  - Dmin7 - 1-3-7-9 (D-F-C-E)
  - G7 - 1-7-3-5 (G-F-B-D)
  - Cmaj 7 - 1-3-7-9 (C-E-B-D)

# Shell Voicings Pt. 2

- Use shell voicings in the right hand while playing bass in the left hand to help learn tunes or accompany
- Add a fourth tone to shell voicings to add more color or when using advanced chords with extensions (9th, 11th, 13th, and their alterations)

# Books

- “Jerry Coker’s Jazz Keyboard - For Pianists and Non-Pianists” - Class or Individual Study by Jerry Coker
- “Jazz Keyboard Harmony” - by Phil DeGreg
- “Jazz Piano Voicing Skills” - by Dan Haerle

Listen to jazz pianists!  
:)