

Understanding a Tune for Improvisation

**by
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Video available through MyMusicMasterclass.com

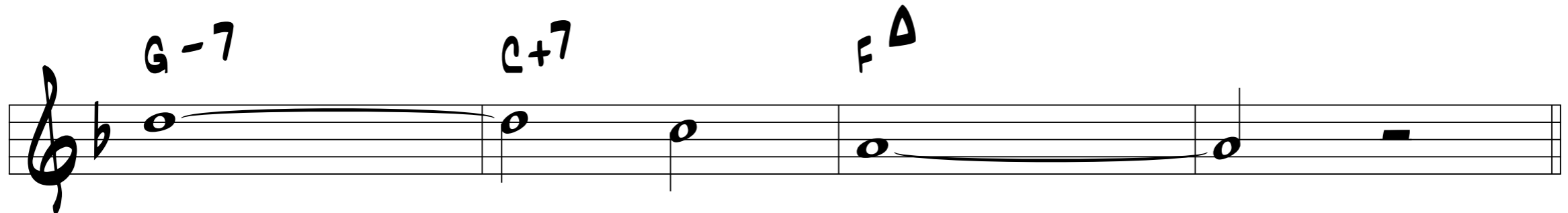
The five main factors to consider:

- 1) The melody and its implications
- 2) Observe which keys are present
- 3) Are the chord symbols specific?
- 4) What are the functions of chords?
- 5) Context - preceding & following chords

ONCE I LOVED

CONCERT PART

ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM



In the second measure, the C+7 indicates a raised 5th (G#) but the melody is on D, a natural 9. These two bits of information suggest a C Whole Tone scale which contains both notes.

HOW INSENSITIVE

CONCERT PART

ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM



The Bb in the melody suggests a natural minor scale, a less common choice in the age of Dorian. The D Dorian scale would have a B natural which is definitely a different sound than the melody!

THE GIRL FROM IPANEMA

CONCERT PART

ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of the following notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (half). Above the staff, four chords are indicated: G-7 above the first measure, Gb7 above the second measure, FΔ above the third measure, and Gb7 above the fourth measure. The staff ends with a double bar line.

In the second measure, the melody suggests a Lydian, b7 scale because the C natural is a #4 (#11) in the chord. Also, Jobim used a tri-tone sub of Gb7 to replace the normal V chord, C7, so it is natural to hear the root of the original V chord!

TRISTE

CONCERT

ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM



The choice of an Fma7b5 suggests an F Lydian scale. F Lydian is the same as A natural minor. If Jobim had called that chord Ami7, a performer might play A Dorian. Jobim sent the message that he didn't want a Dorian sound!

The Melody

- 1) Show respect for the composer
- 2) Material for improvisation
- 3) Development of melodic fragments

The last four measures of Blue Bossa:



Solo sample using melodic material:

(The first eight measures of Blue Bossa,
melodic fragment from the last four bars)

Handwritten musical notation for a solo sample of Blue Bossa. The notation is written on two staves in treble clef, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff contains the first four measures, and the second staff contains the next four measures. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and accidentals. Chord symbols are written above the notes: C-7, F-7, D♭, G7ALT, and C-9. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

**When the chord symbol is not specific,
a melody note may narrow down the choices.**

**If the chord is G7 and there is an Eb in the melody,
that implies a #5 or b13 and the chosen scale
should reinforce that. Several options are shown
below:**



C Harm. minor

G Dim W T

G Mix, b6

G Whole Tone

Sometimes the melody may include a note that implies a specific mode!

5) Modal implications

$\text{C} - 9$ (Dorian implied by A natural) $\text{C} \triangle$ (Lydian implied by F sharp)



The image shows two musical phrases on a single staff in treble clef. The first phrase starts with a common time signature 'C' and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notes are G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. A natural sign is placed above the A4 note. The second phrase starts with a common time signature 'C' and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. A triangle symbol is placed above the F#4 note. Both phrases end with a double bar line.

Chord Symbols

1) General vs. specific



- G7** - general, any dominant 7th scale except blues
- Dmi#7** - requires either harmonic or melodic minor
- G13b9** - the 1/2-W diminished scale includes both
- Cma7#11** - requires a Lydian scale

Keys:

1) Bracketing key areas

Ab Major C Major

F-7 Bb-7 Eb7 Ab^Δ Db^Δ G7 C^Δ

Solo:

F-7 Bb-7 Eb7 Ab^Δ Db^Δ G7 C^Δ

2) Bracketing the II - V - I progression

C Major

C Harmonic Minor

D-7 G7 C Δ | DØ G7ALT C- Δ


Scale Motion:

D-7 G7 C Δ | DØ G7ALT C- Δ

D-7 G7 C Δ | DØ G7ALT C- Δ

Chord Function


1) Color choices I, II, IV, VI in C major



Musical notation showing four measures of a scale in C major. The notes are C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Above the notes are handwritten chord symbols: C^Δ, D-7, F^Δ, and A-7. Below the notes are the mode names: Major, Dorian, Lydian, and Aeolian.

Major **Dorian** **Lydian** **Aeolian**

2) Color choices I, IV, V, VI in C minor

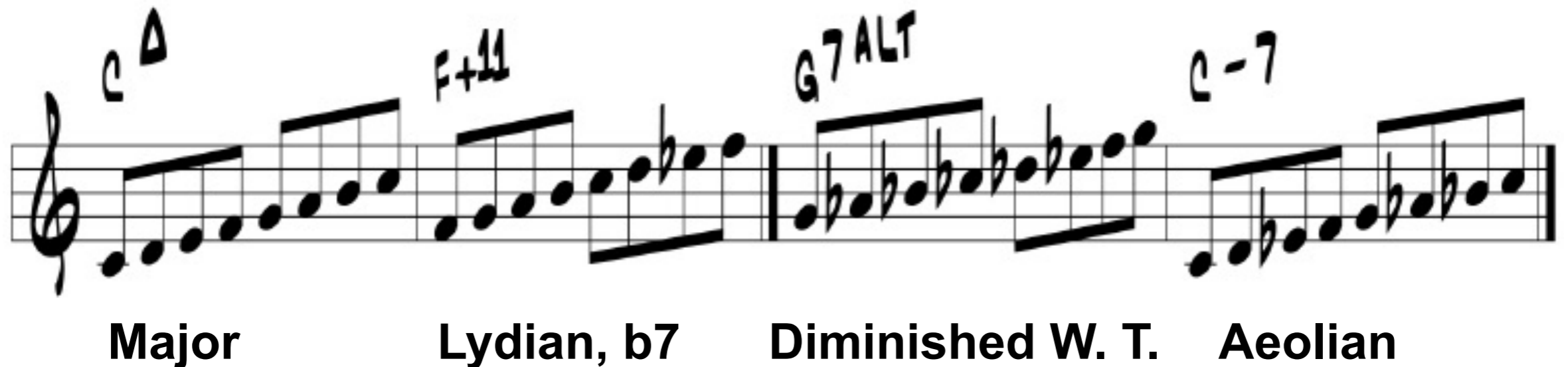


Musical notation showing four measures of a scale in C minor. The notes are C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Above the notes are handwritten chord symbols: C-7, F-7, G7⁹, and A^bΔ+11. Below the notes are the mode names: Aeolian, Dorian, 5th mode H. M., and Lydian.

Aeolian **Dorian** **5th mode H. M.** **Lydian**

Context

1) I – IV7 in major, V7 - I in minor



The image shows a single staff of music in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The staff is divided into four measures, each representing a different scale. Above the staff, the following labels are written in handwritten style: C^Δ, F#11, G7ALT, and C-7. Below the staff, the corresponding scale names are listed: Major, Lydian, b7, Diminished W. T., and Aeolian.

Since we just heard a B natural in the Cma7 chord, we want to hear it continue in the F#11.

The altered scale on G7 prepares the sound of the Cmi7 by supplying all the notes of the key!

Handwritten musical score consisting of five staves. The notation includes notes, rests, and various chord annotations. The first staff has annotations $B-11$ and $G-11$. The second staff has annotations $F\sharp-11$, $A\flat-11$, $B\flat-11$, and $C-11$. The third staff has annotations $B\emptyset$, $E7ALT$, $A\emptyset$, and $D7ALT$. The fourth staff has annotations $G\emptyset$, $C7ALT$, and $F-9$. The fifth staff contains a final melodic phrase ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

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