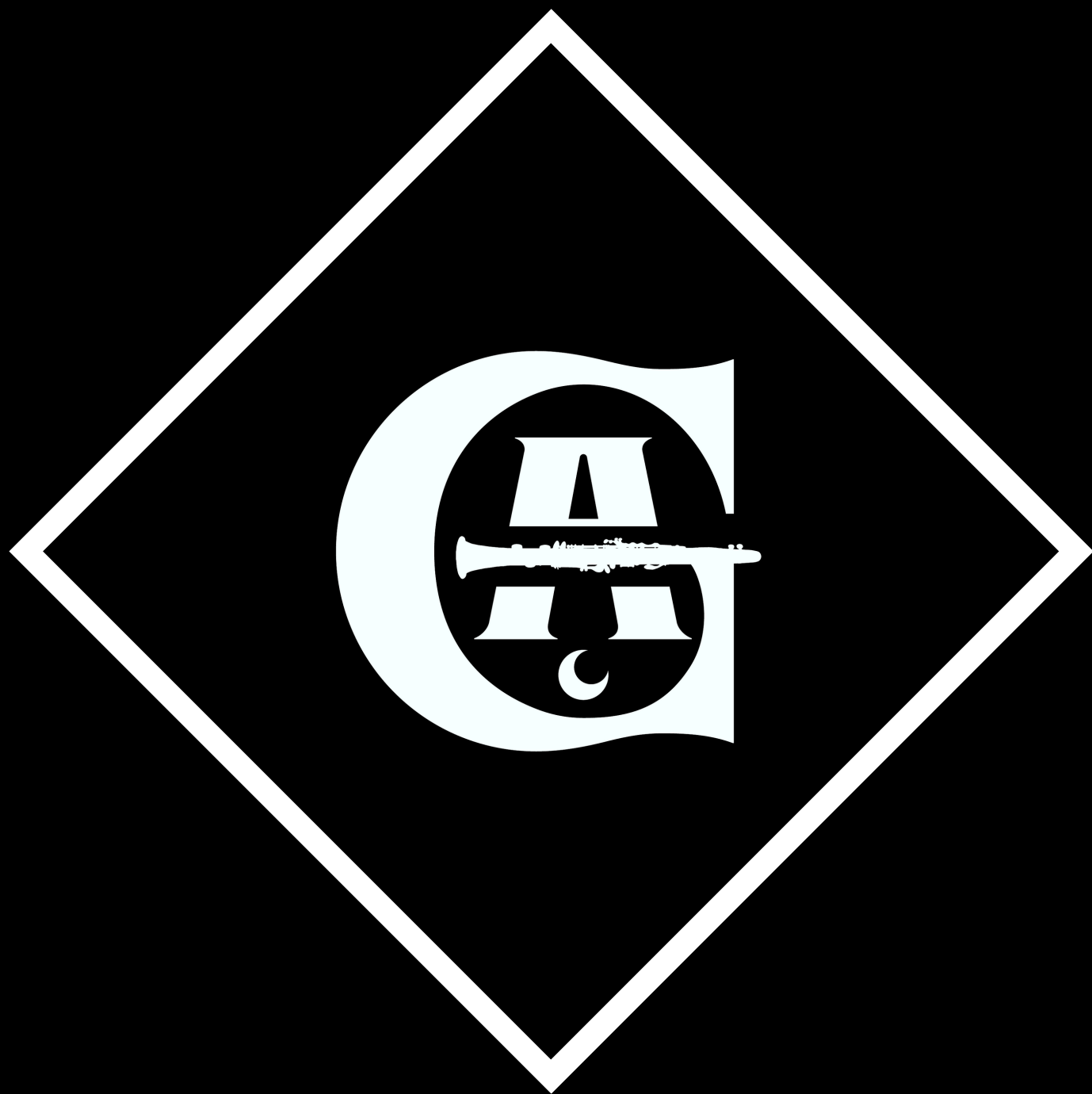


INTRODUCTION TO
ALVIN BATISTE'S
ROOT PROGRESSION



GREGORY AGID

Alvin Batiste was born on November 7, 1932 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Growing up in the city, music was never far. Alvin Batiste's musical quest began the moment he heard Charlie Parker. The introduction to Parker's music ignited a flame that would motivate Batiste for the rest of his career. Batiste recalls, "I wasn't that interested in learning the instrument when he (Batiste's father) bought one for me, until I heard Charlie Parker's recording of 'Now's the Time' at a friend's house. You could only find records like that in one or two stores in New Orleans at the time, and my reaction was, 'What was that?' I started practicing seriously at that point"

The root progression method is a practice tool based on dissecting musical components to their smallest parts and expanding to the limitations of the instrument. This practice method is heavily influenced by Batiste's lessons with Jimmy Hamilton and Sidney Bechet. Hamilton spent much of his practice time working on the chromatic scale. This scale is the most basic scale in western music because it contains all twelve notes; every other scale in western music is simply a rearrangement of the chromatic scale. Combined with Bechet's philosophy of practicing everything in twelve keys, Batiste developed the Root Progression.

The Root Progression system divides the octave into its smallest interval, the minor second, and proceeds to expand based on this interval. This is a unique teaching method because it can be utilized by musicians of different abilities. The Root Progression serves as a practice tool and basis of certain styles of improvisation. This exercise is divided into eight sections: minor second, major second, half-whole, whole-half, minor third, major third, perfect fourth, and augmented fourth.



The most elementary way of understanding this process is by playing through the cycle. For young musicians, the most difficult section is the minor second section. This section requires a knowledge of all the fingerings on one's instrument. Once the student has mastered the chromatic scale, a student can use simple math to understand each succeeding section. The major second is comprised of two minor seconds, minor third is three minor seconds, major third is four minor seconds, and so on. Each section should be taught by memory, reinforcing the sonic differences between intervals; consecutive minor seconds sound different than consecutive major seconds. The most elementary musicians should be able to differentiate sections by ear. The Root Progression introduces students to technical mastery of their instrument, music theory concepts, and opens their ears to different harmonic possibilities.

This method of practice can be expanded throughout the range of the instrument in order to cover all possibilities. The instrumentalist becomes a composer and can dictate the direction of practice. The musician can become sensitive to his strengths and weaknesses and create practice exercises to fulfill his needs. This method of practice can be applied to scales, arpeggios, musical patterns, melodies, bass motions, and whatever else the musician can imagine. This is especially important to the jazz musician because it is a very basic form of improvisation and composition. The musician learns how a simple idea can be developed through motivic development; compositional technique used by classical composers such as Beethoven in his famous 5th Symphony. As the musician spends more time taking concepts through this practice routine he will develop a mastery of instrument and transposition. The mastery of instrument is important because it allows the musician a means to articulate his musical thoughts. Developing mastery of transposition is valuable because it allows a musician to freely improvise by ear without stopping to work out key signatures. Having a practice routine that requires musicians to be actively



involved with the creation of exercise is key in improvisation. This is the foundation to originality in musical content and sound—one does not have to simply regurgitate previously learned phrases. If one does choose to play clichés, the musician will have the tools necessary to develop the ideas at a moment's notice in a unique way. Because no two individuals will practice this method in the exact same way, the Root Progression is the ideal means of developing a unique approach to improvisation.



ROOT PROGRESSION

SECTION ONE: MINOR SECOND, CHROMATIC



SECTION TWO: MAJOR SECOND, WHOLE TONE



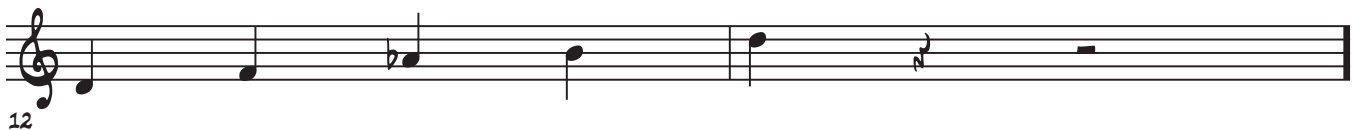
SECTION THREE: HALF-WHOLE



SECTION FOUR: WHOLE-HALF



SECTION FIVE: MINOR THIRD: DIMINISHED



SECTION SIX: MAJOR THIRD: AUGMENTED



SECTION SEVEN: PERFECT FOURTHS: CIRCLE OF FOURTHS



SECTION EIGHT: AUGMENTED FOURTHS, TRITONES (MOVING IN MINOR SECONDS)



ROOT PROGRESSION

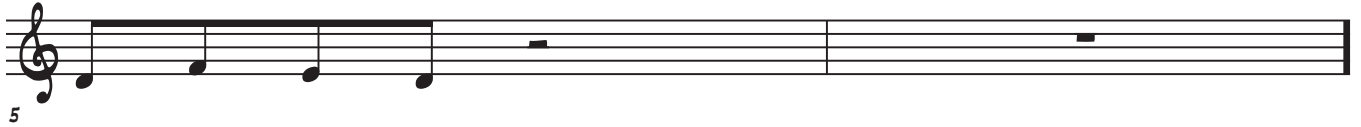


ROOT PROGRESSION SECTION 1

HALF STEPS, MINOR SECONDS, CHROMATIC SCALE



PHRASE ONE



PHRASE ONE, MOVING IN MINOR SECONDS



LICK TRANSPOSED IN ROOT PROGRESSION

SECTION 1

Musical notation for Section 1, measures 1-4. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals.

SECTION 2

Musical notation for Section 2, measures 5-8. The key signature changes to two flats (Bb, Eb) at measure 5. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

SECTION 3

Musical notation for Section 3, measures 9-12. The key signature changes to three flats (Bb, Eb, Fb) at measure 9. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

SECTION 4

Musical notation for Section 4, measures 13-17. The key signature changes to two flats (Bb, Eb) at measure 13. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

SECTION 5

Musical notation for Section 5, measures 18-22. The key signature changes to one flat (Bb) at measure 18. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

SECTION 6

Musical notation for Section 6, measures 23-27. The key signature changes to two flats (Bb, Eb) at measure 23. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

SECTION 7

Musical notation for Section 7, measures 28-31. The key signature changes to three flats (Bb, Eb, Fb) at measure 28. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

SECTION 8

Musical notation for Section 8, measures 32-34. The key signature changes to two flats (Bb, Eb) at measure 32. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.

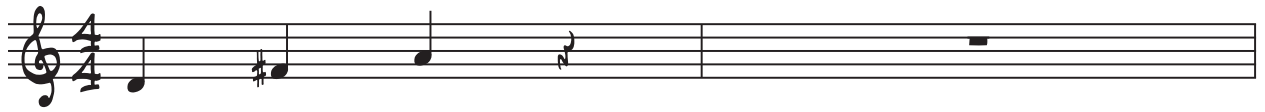
Musical notation for Section 8, measures 35-38. The key signature changes to one flat (Bb) at measure 35. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes.



ROOT PROGRESSION (TRIAD)

TRANSPOSING THROUGH THE ROOT PROGRESSION

MAJOR TRIAD SHAPE



SECTION 1



3

SECTION 2



8

SECTION 3



13

SECTION 4



18



23

SECTION 5

SECTION 6



28

SECTION 7



33

SECTION 8



38



43



48



ROOT PROGRESSION SECTION 2

WHOLE TONE, MAJOR SECONDS, WHOLE STEPS



AUGMENTED TRIAD



3

AUGMENTED TRIAD MOVING IN MAJOR SECONDS



5



ROOT PROGRESSION SECTION 3 & 4

HALF-WHOLE DIMINISHED ACENDING



WHOLE-HALF (DECENDING)



DIMINISHED TRIAD MOVING HALF-WHOLE ACENDING



DIMINISHED TRIAD MOVING WHOLE HALF DECENDING



ROOT PROGRESSION 5 & 6

DIMINISHED

AUGMENTED



DIMINISHED SHAPE



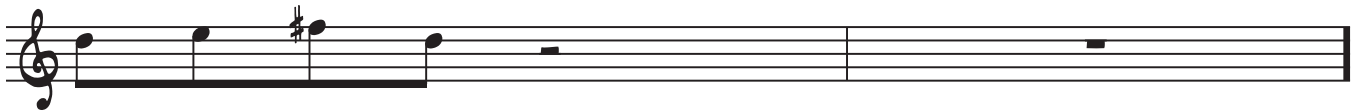
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DIMINISHED SHAPE MOVING IN MINOR THIRDS



5

AUGMENTED SHAPE



11

AUGMENTED SHAPE DECENDING IN MAJOR THIRDS



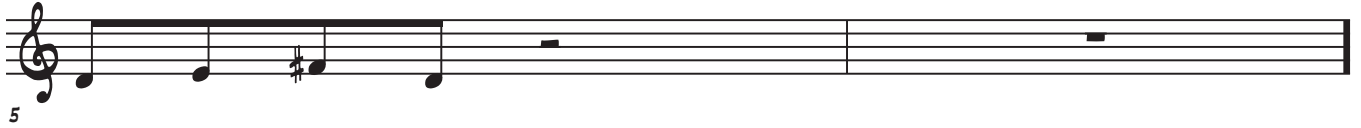
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ROOT PRGRSESION SECTION 7 & 8

PERFECT FOURTHS



PHRASE ONE



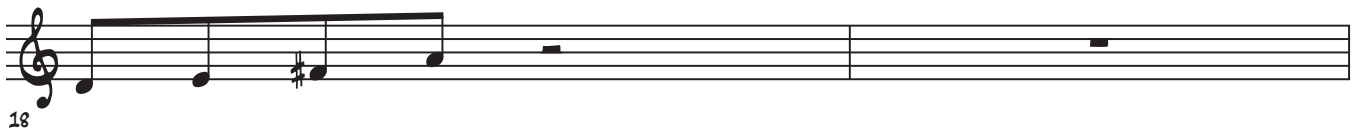
PHRASE ONE MOVING IN PERFECT FOURTHS



AUGMENTED FOURTHS, TRITONES



PHRASE TWO



PHRASE TWO MOVING IN AUGMENTED FOURTHS

