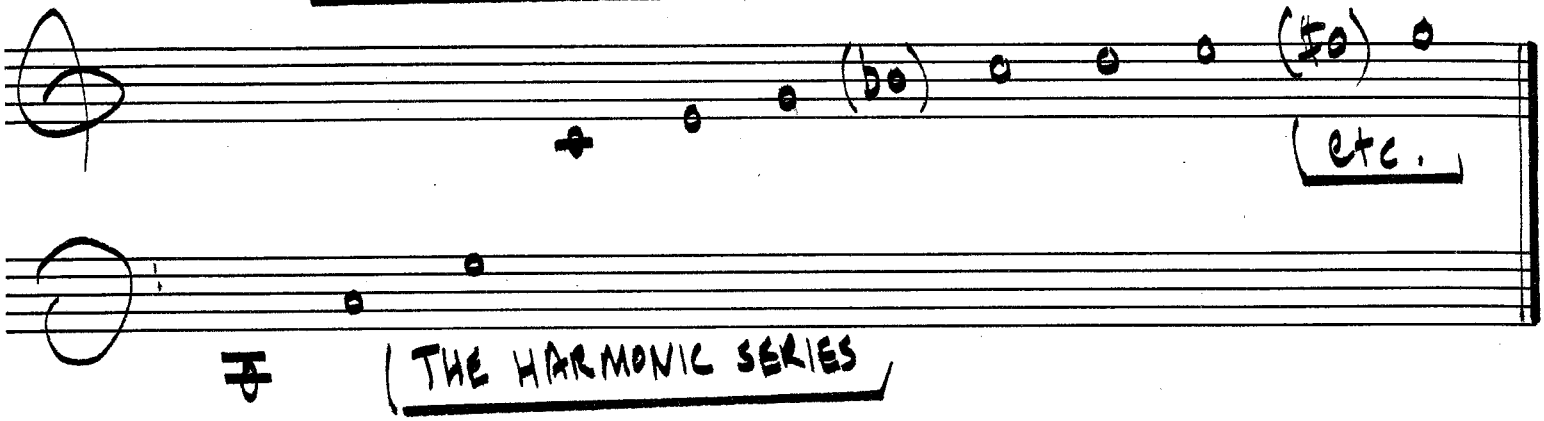
DEMYSTIFYING JAZZ HARMONY - MODES

MALCOLM EDMONSTONE FOR HITS CONFERENCE '08

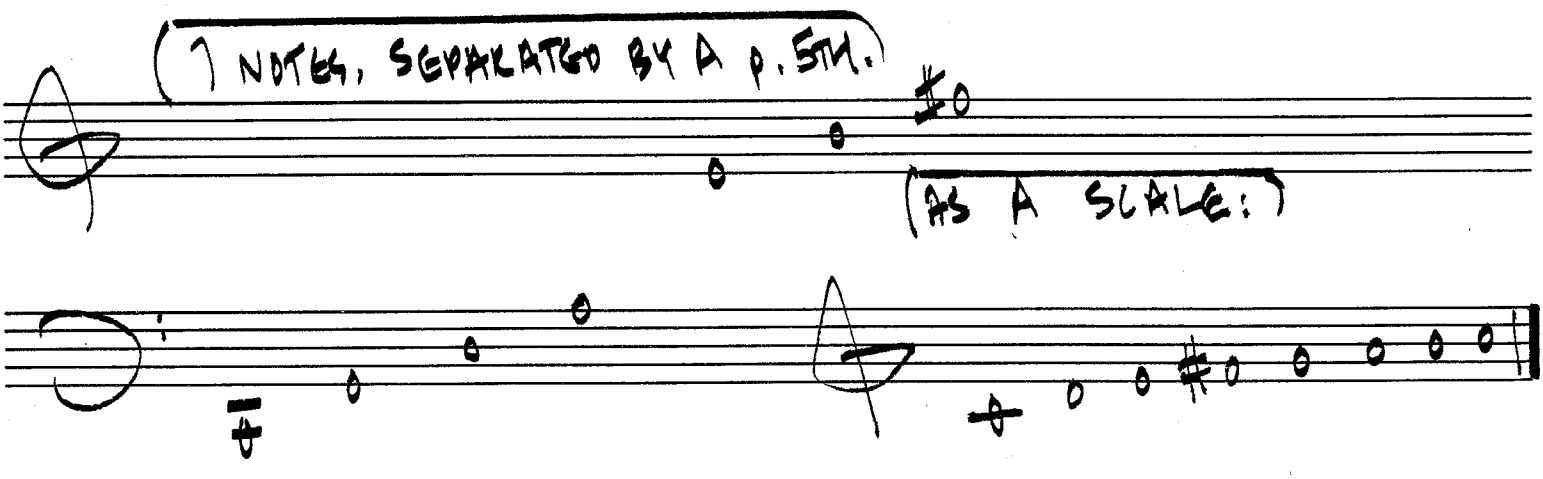


THE HARMONIC SERIES

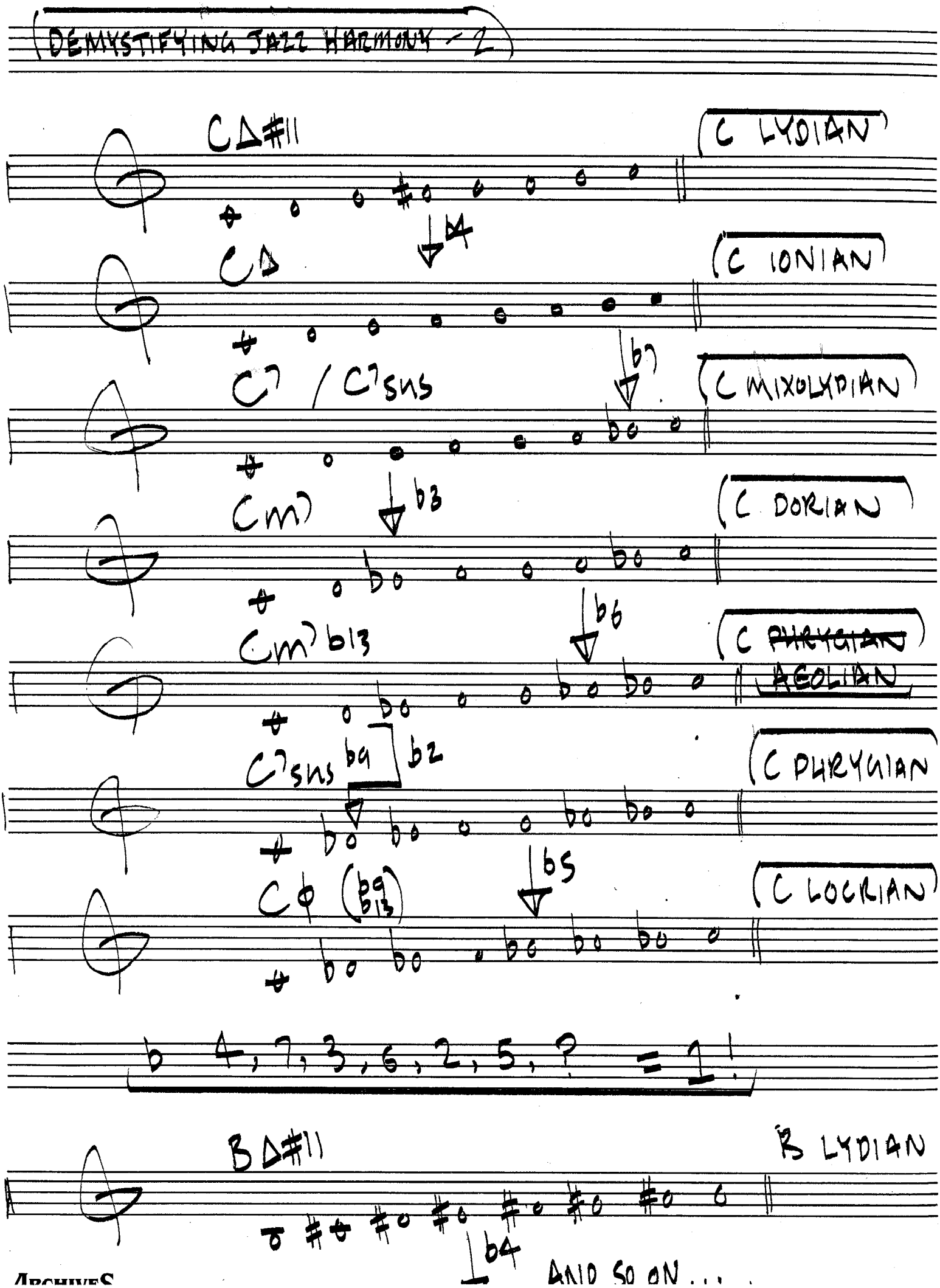
THE SCIENCE OF SOUND, AND THEREFORE MUSIC, IS AT THE CORE OF UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST OF OUR MODES,

LYDIAN

THE JAZZ COMPOSER & THEORETICIAN GEORGE RUSSELL NOTED THAT AFTER THE OCTAVE (UNISON), THE NEXT MOST PREVALENT INTERVAL IS THE PERFECT 5TH, AND SO HE WAS COMPELLED TO STACK PERFECT 5THS UPON A NOTE:



THIS MOST PLEASING OF SOUNDS (NO INTERNAL DISSONANCE) WILL NOW HELP TO GUIDE US THROUGH THE MODES OF THE MAJOR SCALE.


DEMYSTIFYING JAZZ HARMONY - 2
C Δ #11
C LYDIAN
C Δ
C IONIAN
C7 / C7sus
C MIXOLYDIAN
Cm7
C DORIAN
Cm7 b13
C ~~PHRYGIAN~~ AEOLIAN
C7sus
C PHRYGIAN
Cø (b9 b13)
C LOCRIAN
♭ 4, 7, 3, 6, 2, 5, ? = 1 !
B Δ #11
B LYDIAN
AND SO ON . . .

ARCHIVES

DEMYSTIFYING JAZZ HARMONY - 3

OF THESE MODES, THE FIRST FOUR ARE BY FAR THE MOST PREVALENT. YOU CAN INTRODUCE THEM TO YOUR STUDENTS ONE-BY-ONE, CHOOSING A NICE KEY ON THE INSTRUMENT.

THE "COLOUR NOTE" OF EACH MODE IS THE ONE WHICH IS FLATTENED TO GIVE US THAT SCALE:

LYDIAN - I, IONIAN - IV, MIXOLYDIAN - ♭VII, DORIAN - ♭III, AEOLIAN - ♭VI, PHRYGIAN - ♭II, LOCRIAN ♭V

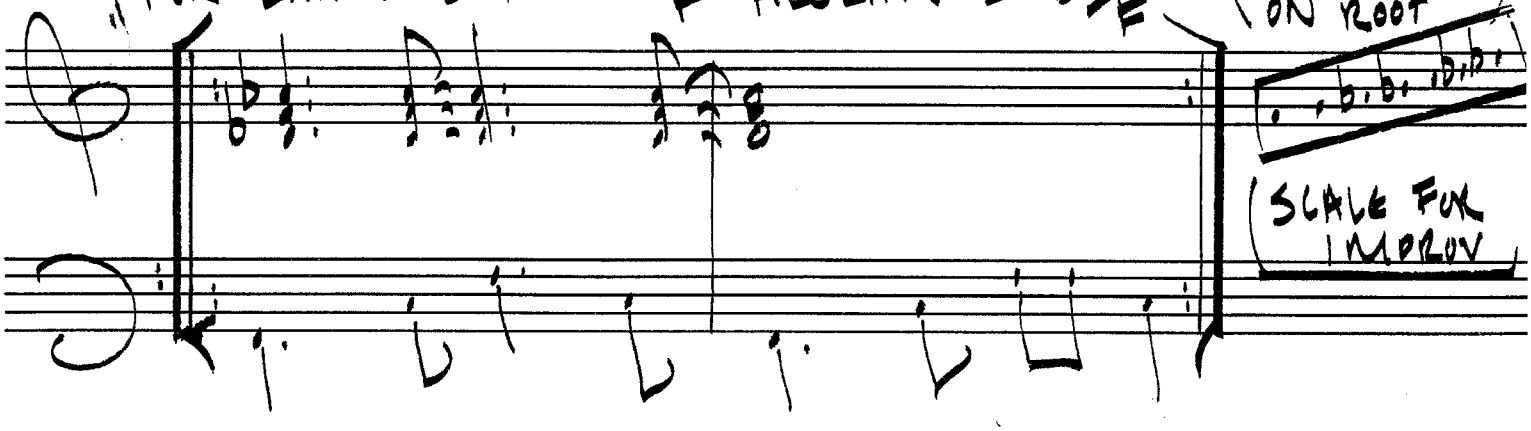
YOU CAN FASHION A SIMPLE YET EFFECTIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY BUILDING A MAJOR TRIAD ON THIS COLOUR NOTE AGAINST A DRONE ON THE ROOT.

(FOR EXAMPLE:

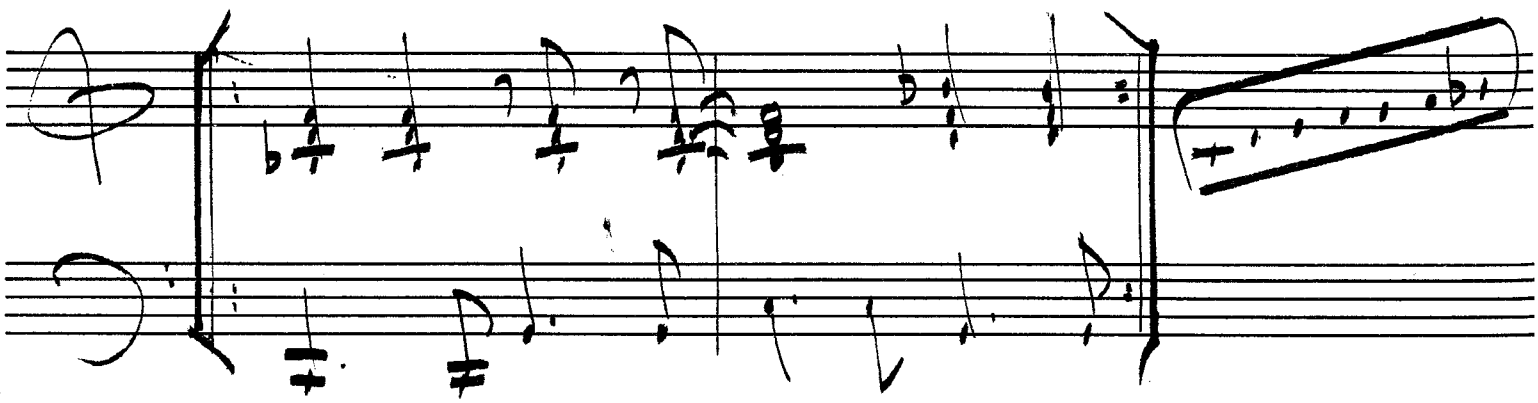
F AEOLIAN = D♭/F

(DRONE (L.H.) ON ROOT

(SCALE FOR IMPROV



C MIXOLYDIAN = B♭/C



DEMYSTIFYING JAZZ HARMONY - 4

HOW TO INCORPORATE INTO NON-JAZZ LESSONS

1. WHILST MUCH OF THIS MATERIAL TAKES ITS ROOTS IN JAZZ, ANY MUSICIAN WILL BENEFIT FROM SOME EXPERIENCE & KNOWLEDGE OF THIS AREA.

2. IT IS A NICE IDEA TO INTRODUCE TO LESSONS A VERY SHORT AND SIMPLE EXERCISE, POSSIBLY AS A WARM-UP OR COOL DOWN, WHICH FOCUSSES ON ONE MODE IN ONE KEY.

3. START WITH THE MODES WHICH ARE EASIEST TO EXPLAIN IN TERMS OF THE MAJOR SCALE.

   I.E. LYDIAN is MAJOR W. RAISED 4TH.
   MIXOLYDIAN is MAJOR W. FLAT. 7TH.

4. SET UP THE GROOVE (AS IN PREVIOUS PAGE).

5. ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENT TO HOLD EACH NOTE OF THE SCALE AND LISTEN TO ITS EFFECT BEFORE MOVING ON (GOOD FOR "LONG NOTE" W/W & BRASS PRACTISE!)

6. AS THE STUDENT GAINS CONFIDENCE SUGGEST VARYING THE SPEED OF THE SCALE, SLOW - FASTER - SLOW.

7. THE DECISION IS ALWAYS THEIRS - YOU ARE ALLOWING THEM TO PROPERLY IMPROVISE WITHOUT THE PRESSURE OF AN ENTIRE JAZZ TUNE.

8. DON'T FEEL AN UNDUE PRESSURE TO MOVE ON QUICKLY - THE MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO DEVELOPE THE EAR, ASSOCIATING THE SOUND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE.

9. IF YOU HAVE A STUDENT WHO IS COMFORTABLE SINGING, THIS IS TO BE ENCOURAGED! SING FIRST, THEN PLAY.

10. HAVE FUN! USE IT AS A BREAK FROM THE RIGOURS OF PRACTISE - YOU WILL SOON RECOGNISE WHEN A STUDENT SHOWS AN APTITUDE FOR JAZZ!

KEEP IN TOUCH! malcolmedmonstone@mac.com

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