



FIDDLE

Improvising from the Beginning Jazz String Curriculum for 4th, 5th and 6th Grade String Orchestra

Part 7: Melody Notes Outside of the Chord

by Cristina Seaborn

Learn how to improvise from the ground up, and build a strong foundation of rhythm, melody, harmony and form. In a series of articles on basic instruction you can give to your 4th, 5th and 6th grade beginning orchestra students, we will be learning how to play accompaniment parts while half the group practices improvisation all at once. This will be a safe place for you and your students to experiment for the first time with spontaneous composition. You will be able to model this for your students, one step at a time. This table of contents lists the series of lesson plans that will come out, one topic in each String Notes magazine article:

- Sound and Silence
- Melody and Chord Progression
- Long and Short Melodies
- Rhythm
- Groove
- Ornamentation of Melody and Rhythm
- Melody Notes Outside of the Chord
- Preparing for Harmonic Change
- Chord Tones
- Guide Tone Lines
- Ornamentation of Guide Tone Lines
- Harmonic Progression

Notes that are not in a chord can be used for a melody or improvisation. Your aesthetic taste may find these notes disagreeable, or you can cultivate a taste for disharmony and harmony—tension and release.

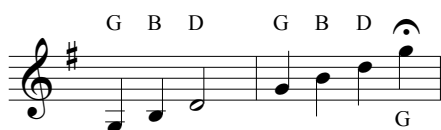
Chord tones are the notes of the chord. A chord is made up of every other note, with three notes needed for a basic chord. For a C chord the notes are C, E, and G.



These chord tones of a melody or improvisation do not need resolution. Chord tones make the melody sound solid and inside the key, as you hear in arpeggiated passages in compositions of Vivaldi or Seitz.

Try an exercise of creating a melody using only chord tones. Use the chords G, C, D, then a final measure of G.

Notes of the G chord:

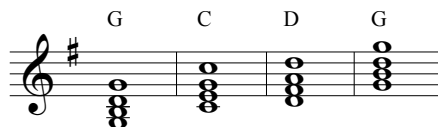


Notes of the D chord:

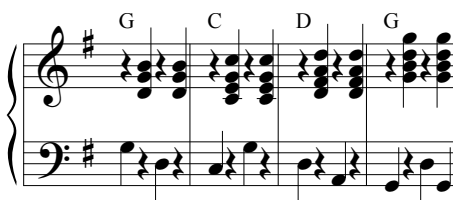


You will be surprised how nice your

composition is! Be sure to add some rests to your composition as well. Start with using only 8th notes and 16th notes. Add three quarter rests to punctuate your melodic ideas. Improvise on:



Play your composition on your instrument with a simple piano accompaniment playing the chord back up:



All notes of the scale can be used for creating your melody. In conventional harmony, composers create discord by means of preparation. Notes outside of the chord demand resolution, usually up or down a whole or half step:



To make a melody sound interesting, a chord tone may be prepared by a step or leap. A leap is any two notes greater than a

whole step apart. Developing your taste for tension and resolution in this way can make your melody or improvisation tantalizing. To delay resolving a non-chord tone, you can leap to another note, and then resolve to a chord tone:



For an advanced jazz level, when the non-diatonic notes outside of the chord are played, then the non-chord tone is resolved to a chord tone through the half step neighbor tone of the chord. You will be using a lot of chromatic notes in this kind of composition or improvisation:



To start practicing improvisation and resolving non-chord tones, choose one scale and one chord such as C. Write out all the notes in the C scale:



While the piano accompaniment plays the chord C, sustain the notes of the G^b pentatonic scale for four beats each (G^b, A^b, B^b, D^b, E^b) or the same enharmonic notes in

the F# pentatonic scale (F#, G#, A#, C#, D#). Enjoy the sound of dissonance and how these notes sound with the chord.



The next step would be to improvise on

a familiar melody such as *Over the Rainbow* or *Pop Goes the Weasel*, experimenting with diatonic non-chord tones, and then notes that are not in the key. Remember to resolve by half steps until you get to your chord tone.

I hope you enjoy the savory flavors of

cultivating your taste for disharmony and harmony—tension and release..

Cristina Seaborn's background includes classical, jazz, Celtic, bluegrass and Texas swing. †