



FIDDLE

Improvising from the Beginning

Jazz String Curriculum for 4th, 5th and 6th Grade String Orchestra

Part 9: Chord Tones

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

The purpose of our practice time in this topic of Chord Tones is to teach our mind and ear how to design a melody at a chord change. While working on improvisation exercises, we will be more controlled than when we are improvising for a concert or performance.

Two tools we will use to create an interesting solo are: 1) leaps in the melody and 2) changing the chord.

When you create a leap in music, both notes in the leap are noticed and attract attention for the listener. The broader the leap, the more interesting the music becomes. At the time of a chord change, the current chord and the new chord both

become noticed. The more unusual the chord is in the key, the richer the result is, given good musical taste.

When both a leap and a chord change happen at the same time, the ear of the listener remembers the two notes of the leap while the new chord is being played. The musical mind also recognizes the relationship of the melody, harmony and the notes of the leap.

The note on the downbeat should be a chord tone, while beats 2, 3, and 4 improvised notes can be some non-chord tones such as passing tones and leaps.

Orchestra teachers can use dropbox to find materials for this lesson to use with

their orchestra program. Go to this link for the score and parts for each instrument of *Temperance Reel*, chord tones, and a blank music staff for the students to write out their solo composition. <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kqp46742ddo3syg/AADC6rl0k8EdlxbqVGDVdOnsa?dl=0>

Exercise #1:

- 1) In the traditional fiddle tune *Temperance Reel*, identify the notes that are chord tones in the melody by circling them.
- 2) A passing tone follows stepwise in the scale. Passing tones can be marked with PT.
- 3) A leap is any more than the interval of a second. Mark a leap with the letter L.

Exercise #2:

Using pencil and paper on a 5-lined music staff, create your improvised solo using half notes only. Write out chord tones using notes from the chords for the fiddle tune *Temperance Reel*.

Exercise #3:

Using your solo from Exercise #2, change the half notes on beat 3 to quarter notes. Add another quarter note on beat 4. Before each chord change, compose a non-chord tone and create a leap.

Exercise #4:

Use the same chord changes, but create

Temperance Reel (The Teetotalers)

your own rhythm using 1 whole note, 2 half notes, and complete your composition with quarter notes, quarter rests, and 8th notes.

Exercise #5:

Record your solo with a piano and cello or bass. Listen and give yourself a critique. Make adjustments on your composition. When you are ready, perform your solo for your teacher or in front of your orchestra class.

You can practice using half notes of the chord progression on other familiar tunes. Keep things simple for yourself while you immerse yourself into the rich world of chord tones and colors.

Expert at fiddling and jazz improvisation, Cristina Seaborn holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in jazz violin performance from Berklee College of Music in Boston, and a Masters in Conducting for Orchestra from St.

Temperance Reel — Chord Tones

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Temperance Reel" focusing on chord tones. It is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. Above the notes, chord symbols are provided: G, Em, G, Em, D, G, Em, D, Em, Em, D, G. The music features a mix of quarter, half, and eighth notes, with some rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Cloud State University. She has produced an instructional video for fiddling through Mel Bay, CDs, and many arrangements of fiddle music, jazz, Scandinavian and original. ‡